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DUNGEON®

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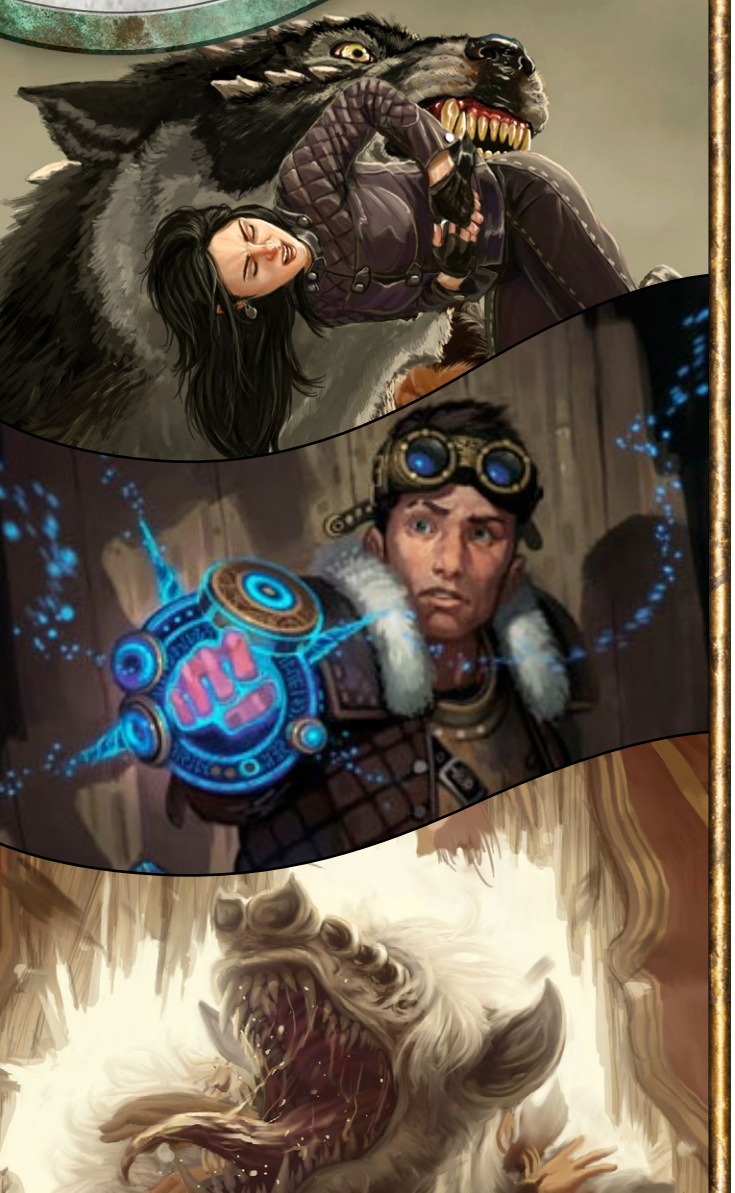
CONTENTS



1 GUEST EDITORIAL

By Will Doyle

Let the real world—past or present—inspire your next adventure.

2 SLAARK'S CROWN

By Craig Campbell

King Slaark's terrible reign is about to end. A DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure for characters of levels 2–4.

18 CHILDREN OF ARDORE

By Christopher Perkins

In the town of Ardore, tragedy—not necessity—is the mother of invention. A D&D adventure for characters of levels 10–12.

31 KING OF THE WOLVES

By Will Doyle

A host of grisly murders in Icewind Dale has the people of the Ten Towns on edge. This D&D Forgotten Realms adventure for characters of levels 4–6 is tied to the release of *Legacy of the Crystal Shard*.

ABOUT THE COVER: *Isarr Kronenstrom is the Jason Voorhees of Icewind Dale. Beth Trott paints a bloody picture of the psychotic, would-be leader of the Wolf Tribe in this month's feature illustration for "King of the Wolves."*

DUNGEON

220

DUNGEON November 2013

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Guest Editorial

By Will Doyle

Herodotus wrote of a labyrinth on the banks of the Nile, a stony maze "greater than words can tell," whose grandeur surpassed even the pyramids. Three thousand chambers sprawled above ground and below—tombs for kings, priests, and sacred crocodiles. North of this place laid Shedyet, City of Crocodiles, where the cultists of Sobek worshiped a living crocodile draped in jewels.

Egypt's lost labyrinth was the inspiration for "Tears of the Crocodile God" (*Dungeon* 209), my first adventure for *Dungeon*. For November, I am delighted to present "King of the Wolves," my fifth publication in this magazine. As with "Glitterdust" (*Dungeon* 211) and "The Rolling Tomb" (*Dungeon* 215), the concept for this adventure came from Chris Perkins and his team. Writing to commission certainly teaches creative discipline (make a writing plan and stick to it!), but it's also fun to work on something fresh. My first submission was pitched while Shedyet and its labyrinth were still whirling in my mind, and that enthusiasm made the task of writing all the more exciting.

I draw inspiration from things I read in the newspaper or pick up from flicking through history books and magazines. Looking back, I see hints of this in my *Dungeon* adventures: a website on Egyptian cults, a commercial for the Venice carnival, a book I read about witchcraft, a documentary on Emperor Qin's tomb. Sometimes the best ideas come from "crossing the streams"—taking inspiration from one source and bashing it into something else. "King of the Wolves," for example, mixes the story of Beowulf with scenes from *Rambo: First Blood*. If you need to devise an adventure in a hurry, try uprooting themes from unlikely novels or movies and transplanting them into your chosen genre. Hollywood does it all the time, to great success.

I'm also a fan of rumor tables and encounter tables. In my own games, I love dropping in random hooks and mysterious, spur-of-the-moment occurrences. As my players speculate on their meaning, I pretend I'm preparing for the next encounter while secretly jotting down their thoughts. As long as there's enough rope to keep them busy, I can thrash out the finer details between sessions. Heck, I've run entire campaigns that way, only revealing the grander plots once my players have handed them to me on a plate. Maybe there's a DM's lesson there. Perhaps our greatest adventures are never truly our own?

"King of the Wolves" was written during a rare heat wave here in the UK. After days spent sweltering in the office, it was a pleasure to step into Icewind Dale by night and stalk the Ten Towns alongside my murderous villain. I wish you well on your own journeys into the Dale, and I hope the other adventures presented here also bring you joy. After all, that's what this wonderful magazine provides—a portal into other worlds. I look forward to our next visit.

Slaark's Crown

A D&D adventure for characters of levels 2–4

By Craig Campbell

Illustrations by Claudio Pozas

Cartography by Jared Blando

A group of goblins and hobgoblins have commandeered a long-forgotten dungeon and outfitted it as their personal fortress. An unusually intelligent goblin named Slaark has declared himself king of all he surveys. After raiding several outlying farms and settlements, Slaark has grown confident enough to start demanding tribute from those he considers under his sway. The local commoners are at a loss for how to deal with Slaark. It's up to the characters to end the threat and bring peace to the area.

"Slaark's Crown" is a D&D adventure for characters of levels 2–4. It can be dropped into any lightly populated woodland area. Before running the adventure, familiarize yourself with the goblin king, his captains, and his fortress.

Background

Around six months ago, a band of goblins and hobgoblins discovered an abandoned dungeon beneath a small hill in the wilderness. They explored the ruin and began converting it to their needs, intent on using it as their own center of power.

For several months, the monsters toiled in and around their fortress, led by a hulking hobgoblin named Drekesh. They transformed the dungeon's rooms into a home, complete with living quarters, a mess hall, and a prison for their enemies. One particularly skilled and intelligent goblin arcanist named Slaark took the lead in converting the abandoned complex to its new function. He designed and crafted traps and locks to protect the finished chambers.

The other goblins and hobgoblins saw that Slaark had the best ideas and that Drekesh was content to simply order them around. Slaark sensed this fact and, with choice words, he persuaded the others to rise up and kill Drekesh, leaving Slaark in charge.

Slaark continued his work, ordering the construction of a wooden palisade atop the small hill that marked the entrance to the subterranean fortress. The monsters cut the tops off several large trees and built the palisade between them, creating a roughly circular wall that had appearance of a wooden crown. His troops named the fortress "Slaark's Crown" and proclaimed Slaark their king.

When the defenses were complete, Slaark ordered his troops to raid the lands around Slaark's Crown. They attacked farms and travelers, amassing food, supplies, and wealth. Anyone who resisted was killed or captured and forced to work in the dungeon.

Ten days ago, Slaark sent troops to deliver messages to several nearby settlements, describing the tribute they should pay Slaark if they wished to avoid further attacks. In the time since, Slaark has ordered his troops to conduct raids on travelers and spy on the settlements in his domain.

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Synopsis

The adventure begins when the characters hear of Slaark's demands from local villagers. After obtaining what information they can, they set off to clear out the goblinoid threat.

As they explore Slaark's Crown, the characters piece together the puzzle that is King Slaark. They find out Slaark has skill in crafting traps and locks. In time, they learn exactly how Slaark came to power.

Adventure Hooks

Use one of the following hooks to draw the characters into the adventure, or come up with one of your own.

Farmers' Cross

As they pass through a village called Farmers' Cross, the adventurers hear about the so-called goblin king. The inhabitants of this trading crossroad and farming settlement are gathered in the village square and are having a heated discussion over how to deal with Slaark's tribute demands.

Tribute Wagon

The characters come upon a tribute wagon en route from Farmers' Cross to Slaark's Crown, learning of the situation in the area by questioning the villagers driving the wagon. This option is ideal if you want to emphasize how the adventurers might use the tribute wagon to get inside the fortress walls by subterfuge.

Rumors from Afar

While traversing the edge of Slaark's territory, the adventurers hear rumors of a goblin king demanding tribute. They then travel either to the village of Farmers' Cross or directly to Slaark's Crown with the aid of directions provided by a helpful local.

Quests

The adventurers can undertake and complete the following quests.

RESCUE THE PRISONERS
3rd-Level Major Quest (150 XP/Character)

The characters complete this quest if they rescue the prisoners Slaark holds in his fortress.

SECURE THE STRONGHOLD
3rd-Level Major Quest (150 XP/Character)

The characters complete this quest after they decide what to do with the fortress. If the characters wish to prevent others from using the dungeon, they complete this quest by finding a way to seal the place. If the characters wish to claim the fort, they complete this quest when they take the place over.

Treasure

Assign treasure appropriate for the party's level using the parcel technique of treasure distribution described in the *Rules Compendium*™ . Here are some options for treasure types and placement.

- The bulk of Slaark's accumulated treasure should be located in the tribute room (area 16), including most of the magic items you wish to give out.
- Slaark might carry several gemstones or small art objects on his person. A few inexpensive gemstones could be set into the wooden crown worn by the goblin king.
- Any of Slaark's captains, as well as the beholder gauth Slaark has allied with, might have a few trinkets of significant value. Such items could be carried on their persons or stashed in the captains' barracks (area 15) or the fissure (area 9).

Locks and Keys

Slaark crafted locks for several parts of the fortress. He has a key for locks besides those to his captains' chests. Each of his captains has the key for one or more locks.

Running the Adventure

On the surface, "Slaark's Crown" is a straightforward dungeon crawl. The adventurers travel through Slaark's fortress and deal with the monsters found there. If the characters just want to kick down doors, kill monsters, and plow forward, let them do so. They also have other options.

Roleplaying

Given that Slaark is expecting tribute, the characters might pretend to bring tribute to the goblin king. If they're successful, they can keep up the charade as long as they like. When an encounter includes an option for talking, a subsection describes what is required to deal with the creatures in the area.

If the characters bypass combat through good roleplaying and/or skill use, they earn the same XP they would have for defeating the monsters. Keep in mind, however, that any enemies left behind are there to confront the characters after they've dealt with Slaark. Don't grant XP for fooling such enemies and later defeating them in combat.

Extended Rests

The characters can fight within Slaark's Crown and then retreat to rest. When they return, they find the remaining enemies on guard. Roleplaying past a group of enemies is then impossible. In addition, the enemies in the fortress might have rearranged themselves and set up new traps or ambushes.

Trouble in Slaark's "Kingdom"

Whatever method you use to bring the adventurers into the story, Barris Feldstone is their main source of information. Barris is an aging human male and a village elder in Farmers' Cross. He is wise, level-headed, and trustworthy. But he has been a farmer all his life and is not prepared to deal with marauding goblinoids. In fact, no one in and around Farmers' Cross is particularly skilled in combat.

If the characters arrive at Farmers' Cross, Barris is leading the discussion in the village square. Most of the villagers are afraid of the goblins and want to pay the tribute. Some are more militant and want to see the goblins killed. Barris is listening to both sides when the characters arrive.

If the characters first come across the tribute wagon, Barris is leading the pair of draft horses pulling it, and three of the most stalwart villagers from Farmers' Cross accompany him. When the characters approach the wagon, they overhear Barris discussing how they're going to make the transfer of tribute. They can also overhear one of the villager's concerns that they might all be captured and enslaved when they get to Slaark's Crown.

Barris tells the characters everything he knows about the situation, which includes the recent raids, Slaark's demand of tribute, and the recent abductions in the area. He doesn't know anything about the interior of the fortress or Slaark's forces.

He requests that the characters rescue any prisoners in Slaark's Crown and return them to Farmers Cross. The characters gain the "Rescue the Prisoners" quest. He also requests that the characters ensure that the Slaark's fortress can never again be used by enemies. The characters gain the "Destroy/Secure the Stronghold" quest.

If the characters agree to help the villagers, Barris offers the most meager of rewards—room and board in the village, ample food and water, and gratitude. That said, he notes that the goblins likely have significant treasure from their raiding.

Slaark's Crown

The above-ground portion of Slaark's fortress is composed of a wooden palisade and gate. A handful of ancillary buildings and a small hillock (the entry to the dungeon below) lie within.

Wandering Guard

Roleplaying Encounter
or Combat Encounter (100 XP)

The characters come upon a lone guard wandering Slaark's Crown—either one goblin cutthroat or one hobgoblin battle guard (statistics for both appear later). You can start this encounter in any way you want. The guard might suddenly come around a corner, or characters might hear the guard approaching before it is aware of them.

The guard is easily fooled if characters pretend to be bringing tribute. If questioned about Slaark and the fort's history, the guard relates whatever you want the characters to know. If the characters press for too much tactical or strategic information, the guard grows wary and retreats to find allies.

The best locations to encounter this guard include the following:

- Upper stair (area 5)
- Mess hall (area 7, combat alerts monsters in area 8 and 10)
- Privies (area 11)
- Escape tunnel (area 12)
- Lower stair (area 13)
- Corridor (area 14, combat alerts monsters in area 18)

1. Palisade

Exploration Encounter

A tall wall surrounds Slaark's Crown.

Light: Varies depending on the time of day.

When characters approach the site, read:

A recently deforested clearing opens on a small rise, with sawed-off tree stumps dotting the area. A palisade of 10-foot-tall tree trunks wraps around the top of the rise, and a single wooden gate faces you. A handful of taller tree trunks are placed in the wall, their upper branches removed. From the distance, the structure resembles a large wooden crown resting atop a grassy head.

A thin stream of smoke rises from within the palisade.

If the characters peer through the gaps in the timbers, a lone goblin mounted on a wolf can be seen making a slow circle of the central hill. Any character who makes a successful DC 15 Perception check hears the huffing and movement of the dire wolf in the largest of the stables (area 3).

Development

The creatures in area 2 don't expect guests. They are resting and engaged in idle banter. If the monsters hear the characters coming, Beshk rides her dire wolf to the gate to meet the party. Other creatures maintain their positions unless Beshk calls them. Refer to area 2 for more information on the monsters.

Walls and Gate

Climbing the wall or gate requires successful DC 15 Athletics checks. The double-door gate is 10 feet wide, 10 feet tall, and barred on the inside (Athletics DC 30 to break). It has the following properties: AC/Reflex 3, Fortitude 15; immune to poison, psychic, forced movement, all conditions; hp 150.

2. Yard

Roleplaying Encounter
or Combat Encounter Level 4 (900 XP)

Wolf riders patrol this area.

Light: Based on the time of day.

Monsters: 1 hobgoblin beast master (Beshk), 1 dire wolf, 2 goblin beast riders, 2 gray wolves, 4 twig blight seedlings.

Other Creatures: 3 human rabble (prisoners).

When characters can see the yard, read:

A pair of stone doors is set into the hillside nearest the palisade entrance. A series of ditches, forming what seems to be an incomplete moat, surround the hill. Several outbuildings stand near the inside edge of the wall, which is lined with thorny brush.

The creatures are in various locations. Beshk is with her dire wolf in area 3, along with another goblin and wolf. One beast rider slowly circles the yard on a wolf. Twig blights hide among the brush (Perception DC 18 to spot them). Each pit contains one human prisoner pitching dirt out of the pit with a shovel, which can be used as a club if the human must fight.

Features of the Area

Pits: Slaark ordered the creation of a moat for his fortress entrance. Each of the three pits is 10 feet deep. Climbing a pit requires successful DC 12 Athletics checks.

Escape Tunnel: The exit of the escape tunnel (area 12) lies along the palisade's east wall. It can be found with a successful DC 15 Perception check.

Beshk

Beshk is especially wary, given that she is the first line of defense at Slaark's Crown. She is more likely to let the characters pass if they have a convincing ruse. If they've hidden their weapons from view, act in a

subservient manner, and/or produce a tribute, she becomes easier to fool.

If the players use skill checks, they need to make three consecutive successful Diplomacy and/or Bluff checks opposed by Beshk's Insight check (with a +2 bonus because of her suspicion) to persuade her. If they fail a skill check, Beshk grows wary (increasing her Insight bonus to +4) and the characters must, again, succeed on three checks to move on. If they fail again, or ever fail a check by 5 or more, Beshk orders her troops to attack.

If the characters talk their way into the fortress, Beshk uses her key to unlock the doors to area 5. She calls forth a goblin cutthroat (see the "Wandering Guard" section) to escort the party.

Beshk also has the key to her chest in area 15.

Prisoners

The human prisoners want only to flee from the fort if the monsters here are slain. They do, however, know a few useful facts about the fortress. They were always blindfolded when led between the yard and the prison, but they know that they traverse a flight of stairs between the two. They can describe the prison (area 8) in detail, including the presence of the gauth.

3. Stables

Exploration Encounter

These small lean-tos house the goblins' wolf mounts.

Light: Based on the time of day.

When characters examine the stables, read:
Numerous wolf prints run through and around these ramshackle wooden lean-tos, with one set of prints noticeably larger than the others. A half-eaten deer lies on blood-stained soil nearby.

The number of stables indicates that Slaark commands more goblins than those present in area 2.

4. Storage Hut

Exploration Encounter

This simple outbuilding is used for storage.

Light: None.

When characters explore the hut, read:
Within this simple hut are many tools, empty barrels and crates, rope, and other bits of gear. A large pile of firewood fills half the hut.

Slaark's troops stow items here for which they have no immediate need. The firewood is to be used in the boiling oil room (area 6).

5. Upper Stair

Exploration Encounter

The stair leads to the first underground level of Slaark's Crown.

Ceiling: 10 feet high in the stair chamber.

Light: Based on the time of day.

When the party approaches the doors, read:
A pair of stone doors is set into the hillside nearest the palisade entrance. A metal lock plate decorates one door.

The doors to the upper stair are locked (DC 15 Thievery check to pick the lock).

When the characters enter, read:
The floor and walls of this chamber are comprised of stone. Upright timbers support a plank ceiling 10 feet above the floor. In the center of the room, a spiral stair of stone descends into darkness.

If the characters examine the doors from the inside, they discover that the lock plate has a lever mechanism built into it. Manipulating the lever locks and unlocks the doors from the inside.

6. Boiling Oil Room

Exploration Encounter
or Combat Encounter (100 XP)

The door to this room is hidden from view outside the hill. Smoke streams from a vent in the hill above it. Discovering the door requires a successful DC 15 Perception check.

Light: Bright firelight.

Monsters: 1 goblin cutthroat.

When characters open the door, read:
A small fire blazes in a long, narrow pit in this room. Metal bowls hang above the fire pit. The bowls are attached to a long, horizontal pole set into the walls. Several small casks are piled nearby.

Goblin Cutthroat	**Level 1 Skirmisher**
Small natural humanoid	XP 100
HP 30; **Bloodied** 15	**Initiative** +5
AC 15, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 13	**Perception** +2
Speed 6	Low-light vision
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⊕ **Short Sword** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage, or 2d6 + 5 if the goblin has combat advantage against the target. In addition, the goblin can shift 1 square.	
➢ **Dagger** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d4 + 5 damage.	
MOVE ACTIONS	
Deft Scurry ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: The goblin shifts up to 3 squares.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
Goblin Tactics ✦ **At-Will**	
Trigger: The goblin is missed by a melee attack.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The goblin shifts 1 square.	
Skills Stealth +8, Thievery +8	
Str 13 (+1) **Dex** 17 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+2)	
Con 14 (+2) **Int** 8 (-1) **Cha** 8 (-1)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Goblin	
Equipment leather armor, light shield, short sword, 2 daggers	

2 Goblin Beast Riders **Level 1 Skirmisher**
Small natural humanoid XP 100 each

HP 29; **Bloodied** 14 **Initiative** +5
AC 15, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13 **Perception** +1
Speed 6 Low-light vision

Traits

Perfect Position
If the goblin is mounted and its mount ends its turn at least 4 squares from where it started, the mounted goblin's attacks deal 1d6 extra damage until the start of the mount's next turn.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Javelin** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 6 damage.

↗ **Javelin** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage.

Triggered Actions

Mounted Goblin Tactics ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The goblin must be mounted.
Trigger: The goblin or its mount is missed by a melee attack.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The goblin's mount shifts 1 square.

Skills Stealth +8, Thievery +8
Str 13 (+1) **Dex** 17 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+1)
Con 13 (+1) **Int** 8 (-1) **Cha** 8 (-1)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Goblin
Equipment leather armor, 6 javelins

Dire Wolf **Level 5 Skirmisher**
Large natural beast (mount) XP 200

HP 67; **Bloodied** 33 **Initiative** +7
AC 19, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16 **Perception** +9
Speed 8 Low-light vision

Traits

Pack Harrier
The wolf has combat advantage against any enemy that is adjacent to two or more of the wolf's allies.

Pack Hunter (mount)
The wolf's rider has combat advantage against any enemy that is adjacent to one of the rider's allies other than the wolf.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Bite** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 4 damage, or 3d8 + 4 against a prone target. The target falls prone if the wolf has combat advantage against it.

Str 19 (+6) **Dex** 16 (+5) **Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 19 (+6) **Int** 5 (-1) **Cha** 11 (+2)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

2 Gray Wolves **Level 2 Skirmisher**
Medium natural beast XP 125 each

HP 38; **Bloodied** 19 **Initiative** +6
AC 16, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13 **Perception** +7
Speed 8 Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊕ **Bite** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage, or 2d6 + 5 against a prone target. If the wolf has combat advantage against the target, the target falls prone.
Effect: The wolf shifts up to 4 squares.

Str 13 (+2) **Dex** 16 (+4) **Wis** 13 (+2)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 2 (-3) **Cha** 10 (+1)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

4 Twig Blight Seedlings **Level 1 Minion Skirmisher**
Small fey humanoid (plant) XP 25 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +5
AC 15, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13 **Perception** +6
Speed 5 (forest walk), climb 5 Darkvision
Resist 5 poison

Traits

Rooted
When an effect forces the seedling to move through a pull, a push, or a slide, the seedling can move 3 squares fewer than the effect specifies.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Claw** (poison) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Before the attack, the seedling shifts up to 2 squares.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 3 poison damage, or 5 poison damage if the target is granting combat advantage to the seedling.

Skills Stealth +8
Str 7 (-2) **Dex** 17 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+1)
Con 9 (-1) **Int** 5 (-3) **Cha** 10 (+0)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Elven

Human Rabble **Level 2 Minion Brute**
Medium natural humanoid XP 31

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +1
AC 16, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 13 **Perception** +1
Speed 6

Traits

Mob Rule
The rabble gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses while adjacent to two or more allies.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Club** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 5 damage.

Str 14 (+3) **Dex** 10 (+1) **Wis** 10 (+1)
Con 12 (+2) **Int** 9 (0) **Cha** 9 (0)
Alignment any **Languages** Common
Equipment club

The goblin here is tending a fire that is part of the trap in area 7. Accustomed to hearing training drills in the yard outside, the goblin doesn't suspect he's in danger until someone opens the secret door.

Trap

The trap apparatus consists of two horizontal rods set into the walls, each containing several bowls of oil heated to boiling by the fire and ready to pour into area 7. The trap can be locked from here with a lever.

If characters examine the trap, they discover a narrow slit in the floor below the oil bowls. A limited view of area 7 is visible through the slit.

Casks

Four casks near the trap contain a gallon of oil each. Several more empty casks are in the same stack.

Dungeon Level 1

The first underground level of Slaark's Crown contains barracks for Slaark's troops, a foul mess hall, a prison, and several other chambers.

Ceiling in the dungeon are 15 feet high.

7. Mess Hall

Exploration Encounter
and Trap Encounter (400 XP)

The goblinoids take their meals in this foul hall.

Light: Dim light from flickering torches.

Trap: Boiling oil chute.

When characters see into the mess hall, read:
Piles of bones and dark stains are the main features of this chamber. The walls and ceiling are faced with stone. Torches hung from the walls provide flickering light. The heavy odor of copper and rot hangs in the air.

Boiling Oil Chute Object	Level 5 Elite Trap XP 400
Detect Perception DC 22	**Initiative** –
Immune attacks	
Triggered Actions	
✧ **Attack** (fire) ✦ **Recharge** when the apparatus is reset	
Trigger: A creature steps on the pressure plate space.	
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Close blast 2 (creatures in the blast); +8 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 3d6 + 5 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).	
Countermeasures	
✦ **Disable:** Thievery DC 22 (standard action). *Success:* The pressure plate is modified and the trap is disabled. *Failure (17 or lower):* The trap triggers.	
✦ **Reset:** A creature near the upper apparatus can take a standard action to reset the trap. If the trap has attacked and been reset already, then attacks again, it must be refilled.	
✦ **Refill:** If the trap needs to be refilled, it takes 1 minute.	

Trap

The trap can be delayed for 2 rounds by pressing a pressure plate set into the wall near the oil chute. Two such plates exist, one within the stair area and one in the mess hall nearby. Finding a wall plate requires a successful DC 20 Perception check.

Bone Piles

The bone piles are difficult terrain. If characters poke through the jumbled piles of bones, they can identify four human skulls, a dwarf skull, a halfling skull, and animal skulls.

8. Prison

Roleplaying Encounter
or Combat Encounter Level 5 (1,175 XP)

The door to this room is locked, and it requires a successful DC 15 Thievery check to open.

Light: Dim light from flickering torches.

Monsters: 1 hobgoblin commander (Thrak), 3 hobgoblin spear soldiers, 1 beholder gauth (Krilgathis), 1 maw demon.

Other Creatures: 5 human rabble (prisoners).

When characters enter the prison, read:
In the center of the room is a large pit. Above the pit, an open-bottomed circular cage, 10 feet across, hangs 5 feet above the pit. A crudely crafted cell, its door closed and chained, takes up the southern portion of the room.

The creatures are in various locations. The maw demon starts in the pit with one prisoner. Each hobgoblin is near the cell. The beholder gauth begins hidden at the top of the fissure (area 9). Four prisoners are in the cell to the south.

Dungeon Level 2
FIRE PIT
10
PILE OF BONES
7
9
CHAIN
DANGLING CAGE
8
PRISON CELL
BOILING OIL TRAP ABOVE
11
12
13
15
16
17
9
PENDULUM SCYTHES
14
13
18
SLIDING WALL
Dungeon Level 1
ROPE
20
HANGING CHANDELIERS
ROPE
19
THRONE
EQUALS 5 FEET

Hobgoblin Commander	**Level 5 Soldier (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid	XP 200
HP 64; **Bloodied** 32	**Initiative** +6
AC 21, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 19	**Perception** +5
Speed 5	Low-light vision
Traits	
Lead from the Front	
When the hobgoblin hits an enemy with a melee attack, the hobgoblin's allies gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls against that enemy until the end of the hobgoblin's next turn.	
Standard Actions	
Spear (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 4 damage.	
Effect: The hobgoblin marks the target until the end of the hobgoblin's next turn.	
Minor Actions	
Tactical Deployment ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⚅	
Effect: Close burst 5 (allies in the burst). Each target can shift up to 3 squares.	
Triggered Actions	
Hobgoblin Resilience ✦ **Encounter**	
Trigger: The hobgoblin is subject to an effect that a save can end.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The hobgoblin can make a saving throw against the triggering effect.	
Str 20 (+7) **Dex** 14 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+5)	
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 12 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+2)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Goblin	
Equipment scale armor, heavy shield, spear	

3 Hobgoblin Spear Soldiers	**Level 3 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid	XP 150 each
HP 48; **Bloodied** 24	**Initiative** +5
AC 17, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 15	**Perception** +3
Speed 6	Low-light vision
Traits	
Threatening Reach	
The hobgoblin can make opportunity attacks against enemies within its weapon's reach (2 squares).	
Standard Actions	
Longspear (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 6 damage.	
Javelin (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 4 damage.	
Move Actions	
Phalanx Movement ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: The hobgoblin and each ally adjacent to it can shift 1 square as a free action. The allies must end adjacent to the hobgoblin.	
Triggered Actions	
Tactical Withdrawal ✦ **At-Will**	
Trigger: An enemy enters a square adjacent to the hobgoblin.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The hobgoblin shifts up to 3 squares.	
Str 19 (+5) **Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+3)	
Con 16 (+4) **Int** 11 (+1) **Cha** 10 (+1)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Goblin	
Equipment chainmail, longspear, 6 javelins	

Beholder Gauth	**Level 5 Elite Artillery**
Medium aberrant magical beast	XP 400
HP 102; **Bloodied** 51	**Initiative** +4
AC 17, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 19	**Perception** +10
Speed 0, fly 6 (hover)	All-around vision, darkvision
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	
Traits	
All-Around Vision	
Enemies can't gain combat advantage by flanking the gauth.	
Standard Actions	
Bite ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d4 + 5 damage.	
Eye Rays ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: The gauth uses two *eye ray* powers chosen from the list below. Each *eye ray* must target a different creature. Using *eye rays* does not provoke opportunity attacks.	
1. *Fire Ray* (fire): Ranged 8; +10 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 6 fire damage.	
2. *Exhaustion Ray* (necrotic): Ranged 8; +10 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 4 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened (save ends).	
3. *Sleep Ray* (charm): Ranged 8; +10 vs. Fortitude; the target is slowed (save ends). *First Failed Saving Throw:* The target is knocked unconscious instead of slowed (save ends).	
4. *Telekinesis Ray:* Ranged 8; +10 vs. Fortitude; the gauth slides the target up to 4 squares.	
Minor Actions	
Central Eye ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +10 vs. Will	
Hit: The target is immobilized until the end of the gauth's next turn.	
Str 12 (+3) **Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+5)	
Con 15 (+4) **Int** 18 (+6) **Cha** 20 (+7)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Deep Speech	

Features of the Area

Pit: The pit is 10 feet deep. Climbing into or out of the pit requires a DC 15 Athletics check.

Cage: The cage is circular and 10 feet tall. It has no bottom. It is affixed to a heavy chain and pulley system set into the stone ceiling. The chains run to a complex gear and lever system on the wall near the fissure as indicated on the map.

Cell: The cell is built from iron bars and wooden planks. A roughly rectangular door, 3 feet high and 5 feet long, has a chain and heavy padlock holding it in place (DC 15 Thievery check to pick the lock).

Thrak

Thrak is the prison overseer, and he's suspicious of intruders. If the characters claim they're bringing tribute, Thrak says they have no business here and should leave. Any misstep causes Thrak to order an attack. Thrak has the keys to area 5, area 8 (here), to the cell door here, and to his chest in area 15.

Krilgathis

A beholder gauth named Krilgathis ventured into Slaark's Crown through the fissure (area 9) a few months ago, when it heard activity in the dungeon. The gauth allied with Slaark. It helps keep guard in exchange for torturing and eating prisoners.

Krilgathis might join negotiations here, but its sadistic predilections mean that if it participates, it probably has only negative effects on the conversation.

The gauth has little loyalty to the goblins. It flees through area 9 if the fight looks lost.

Maw Demon	Level 2 Brute
Medium elemental humanoid (demon)	XP 125
HP 42; **Bloodied** 21	**Initiative** +1
AC 14, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 12	**Perception** +2
Speed 6	Darkvision
Traits	
☼ **Snapping Jaws ✦ Aura** 1	
Enemies within the aura grant combat advantage.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Bite ✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +5 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d12 + 5 damage.	
Move Actions	
Ravenous Advance ✦ At-Will	
Effect: The demon shifts 5 squares to a square adjacent to the nearest bloodied enemy.	
Triggered Actions	
Variable Resistance ✦ Encounter	
Trigger: The demon takes acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage.	
Effect (Free Action): The demon gains resist 10 to the triggering damage type until the end of the encounter.	
Str 17 (+4) **Dex** 11 (+1) **Wis** 13 (+2)	
Con 12 (+2) **Int** 5 (-2) **Cha** 6 (-1)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** understands Abyssal	

Prisoners

The five prisoners need medical attention. Two of them have to be carried home if they can't be healed with magic that requires no expenditure of healing surges on their part. These prisoners know nothing about the rest of the fortress.

9. Fissure

Roleplaying Encounter
or Combat Encounter Level 1 (300 XP)

A long, narrow fissure in the rock connects this area of the dungeon to the level below and with the Underdark far beneath it.

Light: None.

Monsters: 2 spider swarms.

When characters can see into the fissure, read:
A long, narrow pit descends into the depths. It smells of dusty stone and copper.

Spider Swarm	Level 3 Soldier
Medium natural beast (spider, swarm)	XP 150
HP 44; **Bloodied** 22	**Initiative** +6
AC 19, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15	**Perception** +3
Speed 6, climb 6 (spider climb)	Tremorsense 5
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks; **Vulnerable** 5 to close and area attacks	
Traits	
☼ **Swarm Attack ✦ Aura** 1	
Any enemy that starts its turn in the aura is slowed until the start of its next turn.	
Swarm	
The swarm can occupy the same space as another creature, and an enemy can enter its space, which is difficult terrain. The swarm cannot be pulled, pushed, or slid by melee or ranged attacks. It can squeeze through any opening that is large enough for at least one of the creatures it comprises.	
Web Walk	
The spider ignores difficult terrain composed of webs.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Swarm of Fangs** (poison) **✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d6 + 3 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).	
Skills Athletics +6, Stealth +9	
Str 11 (+1) **Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+3)	
Con 12 (+2) **Int** 1 (-4) **Cha** 7 (-1)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

Perception DC 19: The character spots a mass of spiders crawling along the fissure wall.

This fissure opens into area 8. It descends and slices between area 14 and area 17. From there, it continues on into the Underdark, deep beneath Slaark's Crown. The fissure walls are uneven stone, providing plenty of handholds and footholds (DC 10 Athletics to climb).

10. Barracks

Roleplaying Encounter
or Combat Encounter Level 3 (800 XP)

The guards' barracks are simple but functional.

Light: Bright light from the fire pit.

Monsters: 1 hobgoblin commander (Vrilke), 4 hobgoblin battle guards.

When the characters enter the barracks, read:
This large, stone-walled chamber is dotted with ratty mattresses, piles of straw, and other detritus. The walls are smeared with stains and etched with strange lettering.

If monsters are present, two of the hobgoblin battle guards are standing against the far wall and two others are out of sight in the side chambers (DC 17 Perception check to hear them shuffling about). Vrilke begins on the side of the fire pit opposite the characters.

Features of the Area

Fire Pit: This magical fire pit (which produces no smoke) was once part of the kitchen. It now warms this level of the dungeon. Any creature that enters the fire or starts it turn there takes 5 ongoing fire damage (save ends).

Vrilke

Any convincing story is likely to appease Vrilke, who then allows the characters to continue on. The troops know Vrilke isn't smart, but they fear him. They might warn him that the characters are trying to deceive him. If they do, Vrilke flies into a rage and orders an attack.

Vrilke has the key to area 5 and the one to his chest in area 15.

Hobgoblin Commander (Medium natural humanoid)	**Level 5 Soldier (Leader)** XP 200
HP 64; **Bloodied** 32	**Initiative** +6
AC 21, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 19	**Perception** +5
Speed 5	Low-light vision
Traits	
Lead from the Front	
When the hobgoblin hits an enemy with a melee attack, the hobgoblin's allies gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls against that enemy until the end of the hobgoblin's next turn.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Spear** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 4 damage.	
Effect: The hobgoblin marks the target until the end of the hobgoblin's next turn.	
Minor Actions	
✧ **Tactical Deployment** ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞	
Effect: Close burst 5 (allies in the burst). Each target can shift up to 3 squares.	
Triggered Actions	
Hobgoblin Resilience ✦ **Encounter**	
Trigger: The hobgoblin is subject to an effect that a save can end.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The hobgoblin can make a saving throw against the triggering effect.	
Str 20 (+7) **Dex** 14 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+5)	
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 12 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+2)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Goblin	
Equipment scale armor, heavy shield, spear	

4 Hobgoblin Battle Guards (Medium natural humanoid)	**Level 3 Soldier** XP 150 each
HP 49; **Bloodied** 24	**Initiative** +5
AC 19, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 15	**Perception** +8
Speed 6	Low-light vision
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Flail** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage, and the hobgoblin marks the target until the start of the hobgoblin's next turn.	
Move Actions	
Phalanx Movement ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: Close burst 1 (allies in the burst). The hobgoblin and each target can shift 1 square as a free action. The target must shift to a square adjacent to the hobgoblin.	
Triggered Actions	
Share Shield ✦ **At-Will**	
Trigger: An adjacent ally is hit by an attack against AC or Reflex.	
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The ally gains a +2 bonus to AC and Reflex against the triggering attack.	
Str 19 (+5) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 15 (+3)	
Con 17 (+4) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 10 (+1)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Goblin	
Equipment chainmail, heavy shield, flail	

11. Privy

Exploration Encounter

This room is filled with waste.

Light: None.

When characters discover the privy, read:

A foul stench spreads from this chamber, which is filled calf-deep with waste and excrement. The walls are lined with sheets of cloth and leather, all smeared with filth.

A narrow opening behind one of the filthy cloth sheets leads to a tunnel.

12. Escape Tunnel

Exploration Encounter

This tunnel connects the privy (area 11) to the yard above (area 2).

Light: None.

When characters enter the tunnel, read:

This narrow tunnel is difficult to traverse. Its walls and ceiling are cut unevenly into the rock, forcing anyone larger than a halfling to push and squeeze through.

Medium creatures must squeeze to move through this tunnel. Large creatures cannot fit.

13. Lower Stair

Exploration Encounter

The stair connects the first and second dungeon levels.

Light: Dim light from flickering torches.

When characters descend the stair, read:

A stone stair fills this small chamber, descending farther into the ground. A few torches pinned to the stone wall fill the stairwell with light.

Dungeon Level 2

The lowest dungeon level contains Slaark's throne room, his personal chamber, his tribute room, and quarters for his captains.

14. Corridor

Trap Encounter Level 1 (350 XP)

A central passage connects to most of the chambers on this level.

Light: Dim light from braziers.

Trap: Pendulum scythes.

When the characters enter the corridor, read:

This long, wide corridor has two doors to the north and a set of double doors to the south. Fine tiles separated by narrow seams line the floor. The walls are cut smooth from the bedrock but are scored to appear like masonry. Dim light comes from two small braziers, one at each end of the corridor.

Two identical pendulum scythe traps are in this corridor. They cover the areas indicated on the map. The trap blades swing up from gaps between the floor tiles rather than from the ceiling.

The traps can be delayed for 3 rounds by pressing a secret wall plate. One plate is at each end of the corridor, along with one just inside area 18. Finding a plate requires a successful DC 22 Perception check.

15. Captains' Barracks

Exploration Encounter

This chamber houses Slaark's captains.

Light: None.

Pendulum Scythes — **Level 4 Trap**
Object — XP 175

Detect Perception DC 21 — **Initiative** +6
HP 48
AC 15, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 12, **Will** –
Immune necrotic, poison, psychic, forced movement, all conditions, ongoing damage

Standard Actions

Attack ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 0 (each creature in a row of squares); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 2 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends). In addition, the blade pushes the target 1 square (in the direction of the blade's movement) and knocks the target prone.

Countermeasures

✦ **Disable:** Thievery DC 21. *Success:* One blade is disabled, rendering one row of squares safe from attack.
✦ **Predict:** Dungeoneering DC 21 (minor action). *Success:* The creature can determine the row of squares the trap will attack on its next turn.

When characters enter the room, read:

This chamber contains four simple wooden beds with straw mattresses along the walls. Clothing, weapons, and pieces of armor hang from iron spikes hammered into the stone walls, which are neatly painted with phrases in the Goblin language. A metal tile is affixed to the wall near each bed.

Features of the Area

Painted Sayings: The Goblin phrases are sayings Slaark has told his captains in an attempt to train them to be more than brutish thugs. "Victory comes from thinking." "The sword can kill only what the brain can understand." "A dead fool pays no tribute."

Metal Tiles: A metal placard is affixed to the wall near each bed, each etched with that captain's full title in Goblin: "Wolf Captain," "War Captain," "Captain of the Prison," and "Captain of the King's Guard."

Hidden Chests

A small chest is hidden under each bed. Each of these chests is locked (Thievery DC 15 to open). Their contents are as follows:

Wolf Captain's Chest (Beshk): Several commendations from Slaark (each is a piece of parchment with a crude compliment written on it in Goblin); trinkets stolen from prisoners; a rough drawing of the perceived extent of Slaark's kingdom.

War Captain's Chest (Vrilke): One commendation; several rotted chunks of animal meat; several humanoid ears; a rusty dagger.

Captain of the Prison's Chest (Thrak): Several commendations; a crude drawing of a hobgoblin sitting on a throne (Thrak drew this picture of himself).

Captain of the King's Guard's Chest (Brakik): Several commendations; a hobgoblin skull (Drekesh's); a journal written in stilted Common. The journal recounts most of what has happened since the goblinoids' arrival at the dungeon. If characters read it, provide whatever information you want from the adventure background. Be sure to include the part about Slaark overthrowing the previous leader, Drekesh. The account isn't extensive, but gleaning anything useful from the jumbled, barely literate scratchings takes 10 minutes of careful scrutiny.

16. Tribute Room

Exploration Encounter

This chamber holds most of Slaark's amassed treasure.

Light: None.

The door to this room is set with two lock plates. Slaark carries the keys; opening the door without the keys requires two successful DC 18 Thievery checks. If either check fails by more than 5, a mechanism in the door engages so that subsequent lockpicking attempts require successful DC 21 Thievery checks.

When characters enter the tribute room, read:
Assorted furniture, kitchen implements, tools, personal trinkets, and other gear fill this room. Among the mundane items, you spy the glitter of gold and gemstones.

Treasure: Place as much treasure here as you see fit, based on how successfully you imagine Slaark has extorted his "vassals."

17. Rubble

Exploration Encounter

This room was damaged by the earthquake that opened the fissure adjacent to it.

Light: None.

When characters explore west of the traps, read:
The end of the corridor was once a room, but at some time in the past, the floor and ceiling split apart, causing the front wall of the room to collapse. The area is filled with stone debris of all sizes that tumbled from the ceiling and walls. Fissures in the floor and ceiling lead up to the level above and down into darkness.

See area 9 for more on the fissure.

18. Guard Hall

Combat and Trap Encounter Level 3 (775 XP)

The door to this chamber is locked. Slaark and Brakik carry keys for the lock, or it can be picked open with a successful DC 15 Thievery check.

Light: Bright light from braziers.

Monsters: 1 hobgoblin warmonger (Brakik), 3 hobgoblin spear soldiers.

Trap: Sliding wall.

Hobgoblin Warmonger **Level 4 Artillery (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid XP 175

HP 46; **Bloodied** 23 **Initiative** +6
AC 18, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16 **Perception** +4
Speed 6 Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊕ **Mace** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage.

➳ **Longbow** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 30 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 7 damage, and the target grants combat advantage until the start of the hobgoblin's next turn.

✣ **Battle Cry** (charm) ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied
Target: Area burst 1 within 10 (enemies in the burst); +9 vs. Will
Hit: The target makes a basic attack as a free action against a creature of the hobgoblin's choice.
Effect: Each ally in the burst can charge or make a basic attack as a free action. If an ally hits with the attack granted by this power, that ally gains 5 temporary hit points.

Move Actions

Phalanx Movement ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The hobgoblin and each ally adjacent to it can shift 1 square as a free action. The allies must end adjacent to the hobgoblin.

Str 15 (+4)	**Dex** 19 (+6)	**Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 16 (+5)	**Int** 11 (+2)	**Cha** 17 (+5)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Goblin
Equipment chainmail, mace, longbow, 20 arrows

When characters enter, read:
The walls and floor here are made of fine stonework, the ceiling etched with a depiction of the sky. At the far end of the hall is a double door guarded by four hobgoblins.

If the hobgoblins are here, one of them is holding the wall plate (see the "Trap" section). Any character who succeeds on a DC 15 Insight check realizes the guard is up to something. A character who succeeds on a DC 22 (15 if the Insight check is successful) Perception check sees what the hobgoblin is doing.

3 Hobgoblin Spear Soldiers **Level 3 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid XP 150 each

HP 48; **Bloodied** 24 **Initiative** +5
AC 17, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 15 **Perception** +3
Speed 6 Low-light vision

Traits

Threatening Reach
The hobgoblin can make opportunity attacks against enemies within its weapon's reach (2 squares).

Standard Actions

⊕ **Longspear** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 6 damage.

➳ **Javelin** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 4 damage.

Move Actions

Phalanx Movement ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The hobgoblin and each ally adjacent to it can shift 1 square as a free action. The allies must end adjacent to the hobgoblin.

Triggered Actions

Tactical Withdrawal ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: An enemy enters a square adjacent to the hobgoblin.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The hobgoblin shifts up to 3 squares.

Str 19 (+5)	**Dex** 15 (+3)	**Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 16 (+4)	**Int** 11 (+1)	**Cha** 10 (+1)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Goblin
Equipment chainmail, longspear, 6 javelins

Trap

The hobgoblins wait at the far end of the hall, hoping to draw a few intruders toward them so the sliding wall trap can separate them from their allies. If the characters don't approach, Brakik peppers them with arrows and the spear soldiers throw javelins.

One of the hobgoblins is pressing a wall plate that delays the sliding wall trap from activating. When at least one character has moved past the trap's area, the hobgoblin releases the plate. The trap then activates when the next character enters the trapped area.

Sliding Wall	Level 3 Trap
Object	XP 150
Detect Perception DC 21	**Initiative** –
HP 60	
AC 15, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 5, **Will** –	
Immune necrotic, poison, psychic, forced movement, all conditions	

Triggered Actions

Attack ✦ At-Will

Trigger: A creature enters any square in the trap's row of squares.

Attack (Immediate Interrupt): Melee 0 (each creature in the row of trapped squares); +6 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d8 + 9 damage, and the creature is pushed to the western wall and grabbed (escape DC 21). The creature takes 5 damage each time it ends its turn grabbed by the wall.

Miss: The creature slides 1 square to the north or south of the wall (determine randomly) and falls prone.

Countermeasures

✦ **Disable:** Thievery DC 21 (standard action). *Success:* The wall is jammed in place. *Failure (16 or lower):* The trap triggers.

✦ **Move:** Athletics DC 21 (move action). *Success:* The creature prevents the wall from moving and can move it as if slowed. *Failure:* The creature fails to move the wall.

The trap mechanism is set into the wall and is well camouflaged with stone that matches the rest of the wall, though most of the sliding wall is made of wood. The trapped area is denoted on the map.

Brakik

Brakik is a hulking male hobgoblin who serves as Slaark's captain of the king's guard, a position he relishes. He is completely loyal to Slaark, despite his king being a lowly goblin. Brakik is under strict orders to guard the throne room and cannot be tricked into stepping aside.

Brakik has keys to area 5, this area, and his chest in area 15.

19. Throne Room

Combat Encounter Level 6 (1,300 XP)

King Slaark holds audience in this large hall.

Ceiling: 20 feet high.

Light: Bright light from chandeliers.

Monsters: King Slaark, 5 hobgoblin battle guards, 1 imp (Gethilarr), 1 doppelganger sneak (Zin).

When characters enter the room, read:

The walls of this large throne room bear murals of faraway places. Fine alabaster tiles set with perfect joints cover the floor. A vaulted ceiling sports two massive chandeliers, each burning with dozens of candles.

A diminutive goblin wearing a wooden crown sits on a massive mahogany throne, with a pair of hobgoblins standing at his side. Behind the throne, in an alcove shrouded by thin, translucent cloth, a dozen more hobgoblins stand at the ready in perfect formation.

A ragged young woman wearing tattered clothes and a dirty jester's cap dances in front of the goblin king. After a moment, she spies you and cries out, "Finally, someone has come for me!"

Perception DC 15: The character notices a small-winged, red-skinned creature (the imp) lurking in one of the chandeliers.

The "woman" runs to the characters and tries to shelter behind them. She is a doppelganger named Zin. See the "Zin" section for more information.

Two of the hobgoblin battle guards start next to Slaark. Three others are positioned in the alcove behind the throne, in the front row. The imp begins in one of the chandeliers.

Slaark

Slaark is a male goblin, the king and mastermind of Slaark's Crown. He is unusually intelligent and charismatic for a goblin, and he uses his gifts to best advantage in all he does. He is capable, wily, and confident to the point of arrogance.

Slaark is willing to talk to the characters for a while. He wants to determine who leads the group and whether any of the characters is a mage or a healer. He takes the first opportunity to point out his troops waiting behind the curtain and then demands that the characters surrender their weapons and kneel before him as their king.

If the characters play along with Slaark's hubris, they can advance as much as halfway across the

Slaark, Goblin King	Level 6 Controller (Leader)
Small natural humanoid	XP 250
HP 70; **Bloodied** 35	**Initiative** +5
AC 20, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18	**Perception** +4
Speed 6	Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊕ **Short Sword** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6 + 7 damage.

⊕ **Shock Bolt** (lightning) ✦ **At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +9 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d6 + 7 lightning damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

✲ **Groveling Charm** (charm, psychic) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞

Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (enemies in the burst); +9 vs. Will

Hit: 2d6 + 7 psychic damage, and the target falls prone and cannot stand (save ends).

Minor Actions

✲ **Command Troops** ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied

Effect: Close burst 10 (allies that can hear Slaark in the burst); as a free action, the target shifts up to 3 squares. One target can then make a basic attack as part of the same free action.

Triggered Actions

Goblin Tactics ✦ **At-Will**

Trigger: An enemy misses Slaark with a melee attack.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): Slaark shifts 1 square.

Skills Bluff +11, Diplomacy +11, Insight +9, Thievery +10

Str 10 (+3)	**Dex** 15 (+5)	**Wis** 13 (+4)
Con 14 (+5)	**Int** 19 (+7)	**Cha** 16 (+6)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Goblin

Equipment royal robes, short sword, wand, wooden crown

5 Hobgoblin Battle Guards	Level 3 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid	XP 150 each
HP 49; **Bloodied** 24	**Initiative** +5
AC 19, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 15	**Perception** +8
Speed 6	Low-light vision
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Flail** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage, and the hobgoblin marks the target until the start of the hobgoblin's next turn.	
Move Actions	
Phalanx Movement ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: Close burst 1 (allies in the burst). The hobgoblin and each target can shift 1 square as a free action. The target must shift to a square adjacent to the hobgoblin.	
Triggered Actions	
Share Shield ✦ **At-Will**	
Trigger: An adjacent ally is hit by an attack against AC or Reflex.	
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The ally gains a +2 bonus to AC and Reflex against the triggering attack.	
Str 19 (+5) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 15 (+3)	
Con 17 (+4) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 10 (+1)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Goblin	
Equipment chainmail, heavy shield, flail	

throne room. If they approach closer than that, or after Slaark has learned all he can from them, he orders his troops to attack.

While Slaark is formidable and arrogant, he is no fool. If he's bloodied and three or more of his hobgoblin battle guards are dead, the goblin bargains for his life. He starts with low offers, like any negotiator, but he's willing to offer everything he has, including his beloved fortress, in exchange for his life.

Gethilarr

Gethilarr is an imp that masquerades as Slaark's "devil familiar" so Slaark can appear more powerful than he is. If Slaark surrenders and Gethilarr is still alive, the imp stops fighting and tries to persuade the characters to kill the goblin king. If the characters attack Gethilarr at that point, it flees.

Imp	Level 3 Lurker
Small immortal humanoid (devil)	XP 150
HP 40; **Bloodied** 20	**Initiative** +8
AC 17, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 15	**Perception** +8
Speed 4, fly 6	Darkvision
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Bite** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage.	
Vanish (illusion) ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: The imp becomes invisible until the end of its next turn or until it hits or misses with an attack.	
⸸ **Tail Sting** (poison) ✦ **Recharge** when the imp uses *vanish*	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 3 damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 poison damage and a -2 penalty to Will (save ends both).	
Skills Arcana +9, Bluff +9, Stealth +9	
Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+3)	
Con 16 (+4) **Int** 16 (+4) **Cha** 16 (+4)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Supernal	

Zin

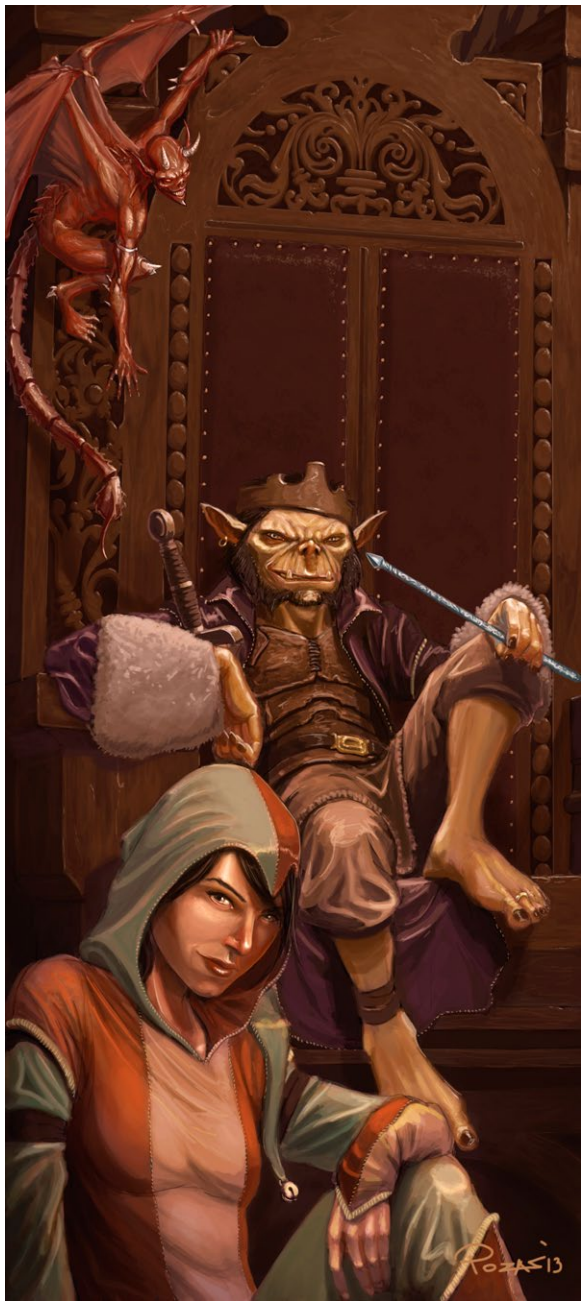
Zin is a doppelganger who masquerades as a young human female while serving as Slaark's "court jester." Slaark treats Zin well, and the doppelganger, in turn, has invested his loyalty in the goblin king . . . for now. If Slaark surrenders and Zin is still alive, the doppelganger immediately flees.

Features of the Area

Troop Alcove: A sheer curtain across the front of this alcove barely conceals what appear to be twelve hobgoblin guards, all dressed and armed identically. All but three of them are mannequins outfitted to look like soldiers. A successful DC 22 Perception check reveals the ruse.

Chandeliers: Two massive chandeliers hang from the ceiling as noted on the map. Both are 10 feet in diameter, covered with lit candles, and very heavy. Each chandelier is suspended by a heavy rope affixed to the side wall.

Doppelganger Sneak	Level 3 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (shapechanger)	XP 150
HP 45; **Bloodied** 22	**Initiative** +6
AC 17, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15	**Perception** +2
Speed 6	
Standard Action	
⊕ **Short Sword** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d6 + 6 damage, or 2d6 + 6 if the doppelganger has combat advantage against the target.	
Minor Actions	
Change Shape (polymorph) ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: The doppelganger alters its physical form to appear as a Medium humanoid until it uses *change shape* again or until it drops to 0 hit points. To assume a specific individual's form, the doppelganger must have seen that individual. Other creatures can make a DC 30 Insight check to discern that the form is a disguise.	
⸸ **Shapeshifter Feint** ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex	
Hit: The target grants combat advantage to the doppelganger until the end of the doppelganger's next turn.	
Skills Bluff +8, Insight +7, Stealth +9	
Str 11 (+1) **Dex** 16 (+4) **Wis** 12 (+2)	
Con 13 (+2) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 15 (+3)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common	
Equipment short sword	



20. King's Chamber

Exploration Encounter

This is Slaark's private chamber.

Light: None.

When characters enter, read:

This small chamber has a cherry wood bed with a fluffy mattress and pillows, a wooden wardrobe, and a large metal chest. The walls and floor are composed of fine masonry, the joints gilded with silver filigree.

This is Slaark's personal chamber and the nicest room in Slaark's Crown.

Chest: The chest is locked, requiring a successful DC 20 Thievery check to open.

Inside are a few articles of fine clothing and a journal. Within the journal, penned in meticulous Common, is a complete description of Slaark's plan. He describes everything covered in the adventure background, generously laced with the disdain he holds for his slovenly, stupid followers.

Additionally, the journal contains sketches of each of the traps and locks in Slaark's Crown, as well as plans for a few others not yet implemented.

Wardrobe: The wardrobe holds a variety of goblin-sized clothing (mostly halfling clothing that has been slightly modified), several fine hats, and three pairs of shoes.

Concluding the Adventure

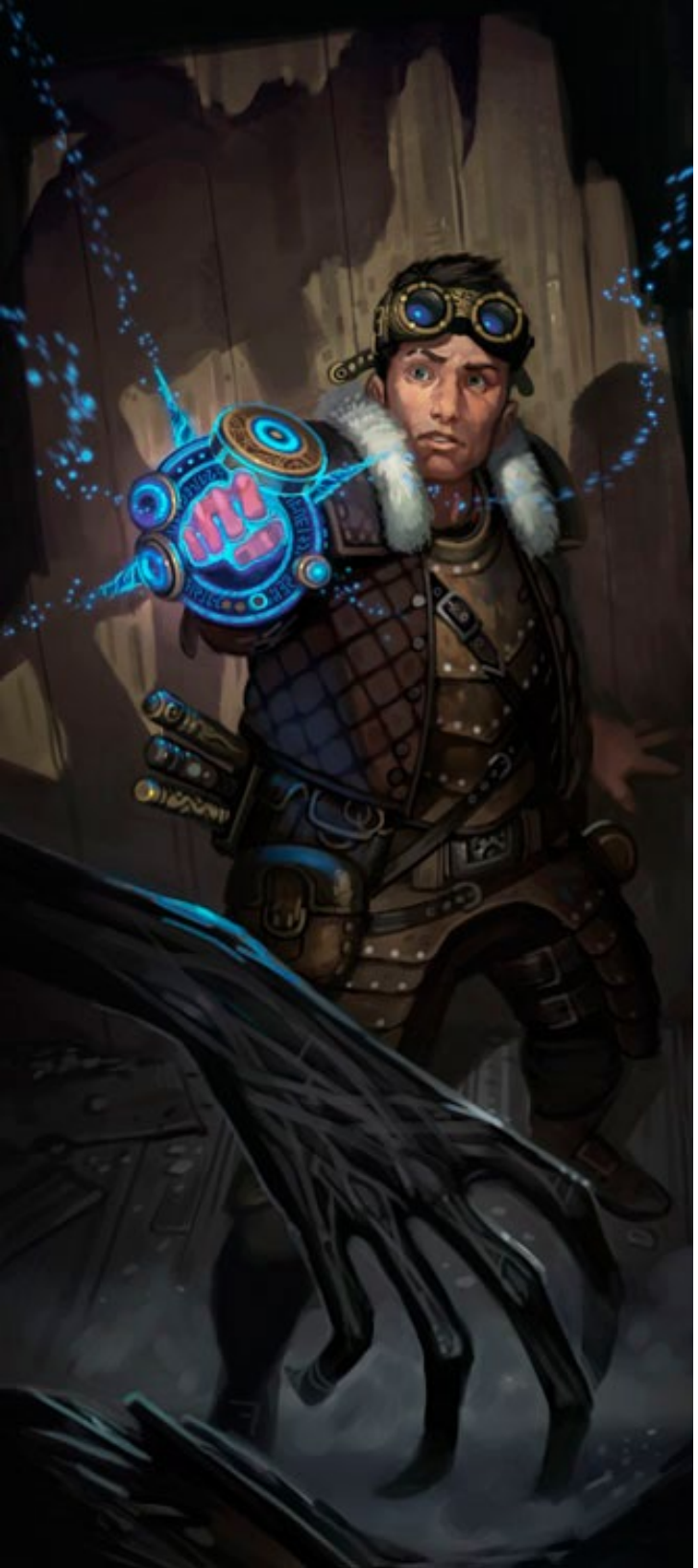
With Slaark defeated, the remaining goblins and hobgoblins flee the area.

If Slaark escapes, he vows revenge and begins gathering forces anew. If the characters spread the word of how Slaark looked down on his kin (as discovered in the goblin king's journal), Slaark has a difficult time gathering more followers.

The people of Farmers' Cross and the other nearby villages are overjoyed to be out from under the thumb of their "king." The villagers host a festival day in honor of the characters, complete with food, drinks, songs, dance, and games.

About the Author

Craig Campbell is an architect by day and a D&D player, DM, and freelancer by night. His most recent *Dungeon* adventures include "Dark Lantern" in *Dungeon* 214 and "A Rhyme Gone Wrong" in *Dungeon* 217. He cohosts a weekly podcast about all things geeky titled *NerdBurger*. Check it out at www.nerdburgershow.com.



Children of Ardore

A D&D adventure for characters of levels 10-12

By Christopher Perkins

Illustrations by Eric Belisle, Anne Stokes, and Ben Wootten

Cartography by Mike Schley

Three miles south of the sleepy town of Ardore stands a grassy hill dotted with trees. Once favored by campers and young lovers, this site became a meeting ground for evil witches a little over a year ago. Locals took to calling it Cackle Hill, and they spoke of how the witches danced atop the hill on nights of the new moon, pledging their bodies and souls to the demon lord Graz'zt, whom they called the Dark Prince. Summoning demons, the witches bound them to create animated scarecrows to do their bidding. They never threatened Ardore with their magic or their straw lackeys, but the townsfolk were concerned nonetheless.

The Curse

The vicar of Ardore wrote a letter to the duke, calling on him to rid the town of the witch coven. The duke hired adventurers, who waited for the next new moon, stormed Cackle Hill, and slew the witches. Afterward, one of these adventurers—a young and brilliant artificer named Alastair Gray—elected to stay in town. While Alastair settled into his new residence, his companions left Ardore to collect their reward and find new adventures. Peace returned to the town for a time.

Then one moonless night eight months ago, a terrible curse befell the town. All children under the age of thirteen were stricken with a deadly illness and perished in a matter of days. Grief-stricken parents blamed the tragedy on vengeful witches who had somehow escaped the slaughter. Many of the townsfolk and their older children fled, fearing further retribution. The distraught vicar, who was blamed for incurring the witches' wrath, hanged himself in his home. Resentful townsfolk also accosted Alastair. Unlike the vicar, the artificer tried his best to put the good citizens of Ardore at ease.

Alastair Gray's Contraption

A master of the arcane arts, Alastair realized that Cackle Hill had strong ties to the Abyss. After settling in Ardore, he spent many lonely nights atop the hill, studying its power under the cover of darkness.

Alastair was devastated when the young children of Ardore perished, and he blamed himself for the tragedy. Unable to console the devastated parents, he set his mind toward building a clockwork construct resembling a young boy. He hoped to imbue the construct with a childlike personality and bequeath it to a young couple who had lost their son. Try as he might, he could not infuse the construct with a semblance of life. Then, one dark night, Alastair had a dream in which he stood atop Cackle Hill, surrounded by childlike constructs dancing in a circle and singing like real children.

Alastair's dream prompted him to build an arcane contraption capable of trapping and binding

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demonic spirits. Believing that a demon's essence could be used for benevolent ends, he brought the contraption to Cackle Hill and captured the spirit of a babau. On returning home, Alastair transferred the demon's essence to his construct and compelled it to do his bidding.

Over the next two months, Alastair fashioned more constructs, plucking the necessary demonic essence from Cackle Hill with the aid of his portable contraption, called the *demonbinder*. The artificer then unveiled his creations to the townsfolk, while neglecting to mention how these small wonders were given life. The constructs were fragile, harmless things that behaved exactly as children should. Gradually, they began to win over the local populace. Now the realm is abuzz with rumors of a rural town populated by frolicking clockwork children.

Willifer Harmuga's Wrath

The evil witch Willifer Harmuga survived the attack on Cackle Hill and fled into the woods, returning to Ardore months later to exact her revenge. The last of her coven, she is responsible for the plague that claimed the lives of Ardore's children, as well as its current troubles.

Willifer was born with an extra finger on each hand, which in her mind (and the minds of her fellow witches) means she was blessed by the Dark Prince. Willifer petitioned Graz'zt for aid, and in exchange for her youth, he bestowed on her the power to curse the children of Ardore. Invoking this fell power transformed her into a withered crone—a price the scornful witch was more than willing to pay.

For months, Willifer hid on the outskirts of Ardore and reveled in the town's misery. Then the appearance of the clockwork children changed the mood of Ardore's citizens. As the town's grief waned, Willifer's anger grew, and she set out to steal the clockwork children and destroy their creator.

Events

The adventure consists of a series of events that unfold in a prescribed order.

Event 1: Town of the Clockwork Children

Roleplaying Encounter

In this event, the characters investigate rumors of clockwork children in Ardore. The adventure begins when Ingar Talstrom, a cousin of the duke, approaches the characters with a quest.

When you are ready to begin play, read:

Rumors have spread throughout the duchy of a sleepy rural town called Ardore, where the children are actually clockwork constructs. The rumors have piqued the curiosity of Ingar Talstrom, a cousin of the duke.

"Strange magic is at large in Ardore, my friends," says Ingar. "Although the town is of little importance, it has endured great hardship of late. Last year, the duke hired adventurers to rid the place of unwelcome neighbors—demon worshipers, I believe. That endeavor was successful, but months later, a plague swept through Ardore, claiming many lives and leaving its survivors grief-stricken.

"The duke has other matters to attend to, but he asks that you visit Ardore and see whether the rumors are true. If clockwork children are about, he wants to know who created them and why."

Ingar Talstrom (unaligned male human) is authorized to pay the characters for their assistance, but he hopes that they'll visit Ardore for the simple privilege of helping his lord and cousin, the duke.

If the characters demand payment, Ingar offers 500 gp as recompense. ("It is, after all, a simple task.") If that isn't alluring enough, he offers the adventurers an invitation to join him on the Duke's Hunt—a

ARDORE

The town's population has shrunk from five hundred to roughly two hundred in recent months. Ardore isn't built on a major trade route, so it doesn't see much traffic. What it lacks in importance, it makes up for in beauty, nestled among lightly wooded hills, meandering creeks, and crow-haunted meadows.

The leader of Ardore is traditionally a vicar with ties to the temple of Erathis, but the town has not appointed a new vicar since the previous one, Jalan Rethe, hanged himself seven months ago. His widow and teenaged son left town soon thereafter.

Population: Approximately 200 (adults and teenagers only). Most of the townsfolk are human.

Leader: None. The richest resident of Ardore is Alastair Gray, the wizard-artificer. In the absence of a vicar, many locals consider him to be the town's de facto leader, though it's a role he shuns.

Inns and Taverns: The Cat's Tail is the only open establishment. This cozy inn is run by Dargol Heinvick (lawful good male human), an old fellow with a heart of gold, and his plucky wife, Perella (neutral good female human). The Heinvicks' cats keep the establishment free of vermin. A local tavern, the Twisted Whistle, closed when its proprietor fled Ardore six months ago.

Temple: A wooden temple of Erathis dominates the town square. The artificer Alastair Gray is a faithful Erathis worshiper, and he supports the temple financially. The temple's priest is a meek, blind woman in her thirties named Marna Devasky. She rarely strays far from the temple, and her sermons are just as timid and meandering as she is. She has a crush on the soft-spoken Alastair Gray, but believes he is harboring some kind of terrible secret.

seasonal three-day event during which the duke sets out with a small retinue to hunt game in his private forest. Ingar describes it as a "bonding opportunity." He also mentions that "many esteemed lords would kill for such an invitation." The Duke's Hunt won't take place for another few weeks, giving the characters plenty of time to investigate Ardore.

If the characters agree to Ingar's terms, they gain the following quest.

VERIFY THE RUMORS
10th-Level Major Quest (500 XP/Character)

The characters receive this quest reward if they learn who created the clockwork children and why. Double the XP award if the characters learn the truth about the demonic spirits empowering the constructs.

Event 2: Last Straw

Combat Encounter Level 13 (4,875 XP)

In this event, the characters arrive at Ardore and discover the town under siege. Over the past several days, animated scarecrows under the command of Willifer have kidnapped most of the clockwork children and brought them to Cackle Hill. When the characters arrive, they see a force gathered on the outskirts of town, demanding that the townsfolk surrender the creator of the clockwork children.

To begin this encounter, read:
The journey to Ardore is uneventful. Bright leaves fall from the autumn trees, carpeting a dirt road in shades of yellow, orange, and red. The road runs northeast, following a creek that winds through hills and meadows, until it reaches the settlement. As the town comes into view, a host of sinister shapes can be seen gathered on the outskirts. Nearly a dozen scarecrows lurch about, watched over by four figures wrapped in dark cloaks and linens.

Unless the characters call out to them, the monsters are focused on the town and have their backs to the party's approach.

One cloaked figure raises a charred fist and calls out with a raspy female voice, "The inventor! Bring him to us, or you will never see the children again! You have one hour!"

The townsfolk have barricaded themselves in their homes and do not answer the witch's ultimatum. If the characters do nothing, the witches and scarecrows wait for one hour. After that, they enter the town and begin hunting for their elusive quarry, killing anyone else they encounter.

Creatures: Leading the evil force are four burned witches (W). These charred skeletons are the remains of witches Willifer reanimated. The undead creatures are covered in black wrappings and draped in heavy cloaks. The witches command four scarecrow horrors (S) and seven scarecrow shamblers (H).

If the characters quickly offer to help the witches, they reply, "Bring us the one who made the wretched automatons and you will be spared our wrath!" The witches don't know who created the clockwork children, and they refuse to divulge where the missing children are being kept. If the adventurers refuse or present any threat, the witches hiss and order the scarecrows to attack.

Treasure: One burned witch wears an *observer's ring*. This item is currently attuned to Willifer.

Observer's Ring Level 11 Uncommon

This ring is set with a hemispherical glass eyeball that looks around when it is worn.

Wondrous Item 9,000 gp

Property

If you wear the ring for 8 consecutive hours, you become attuned to it. Only one creature can be attuned to the ring at a time.

Utility Power ✦ At-Will (Standard Action)

Requirement: You must be attuned to the ring, and the ring must be on the same plane as you.

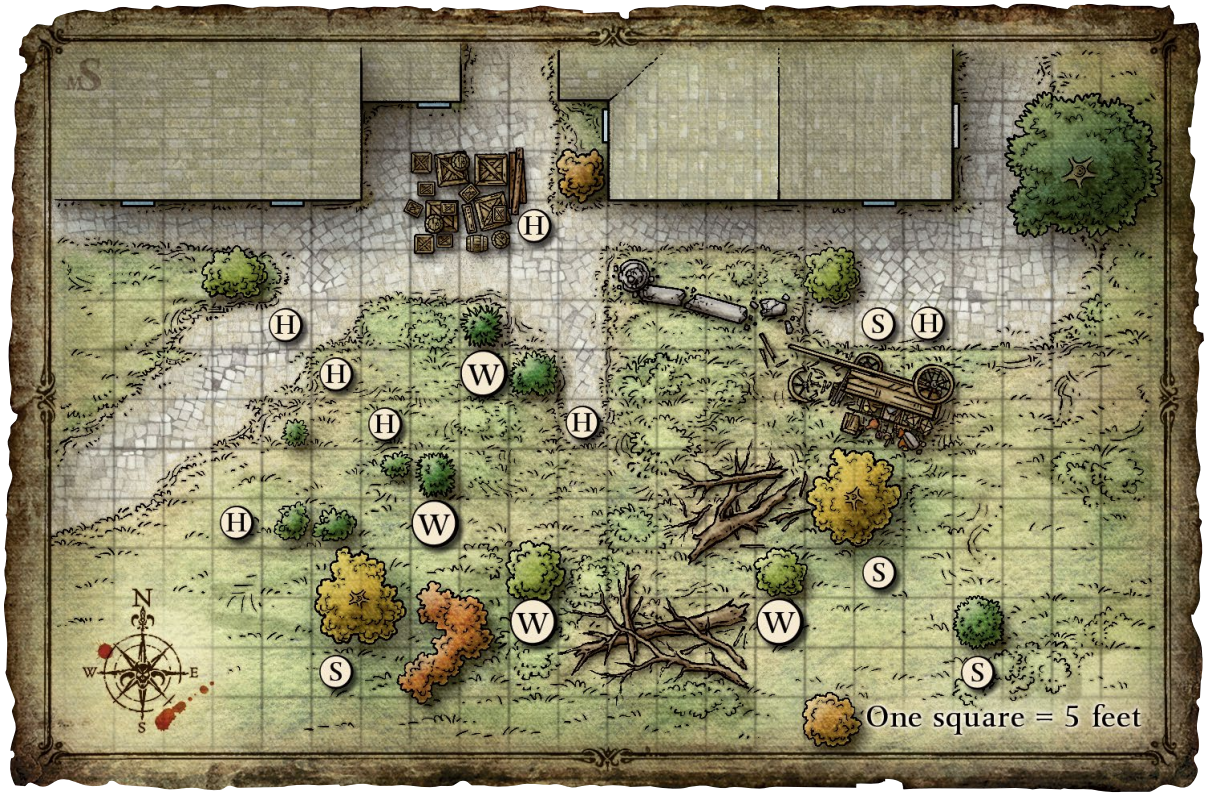
Effect: Until the start of your next turn, you can see as if you were in the ring's position, but you cannot see with your own eyes.

Features of the Area

Buildings: The northwest building is an empty and abandoned storehouse. The northeast building is the general store, within which five townsfolk are hidden. Both buildings are made of wood and have windows that are boarded up on the inside (DC 15 Strength check to smash through). A wooden door on the east side of the general store is barred from within (DC 20 Athletics check to force open). The buildings are one story tall (DC 10 Athletics check to climb).

Crates: A large pile of empty crates and lumber stands between the two buildings.

Destroyed Wagon: The wreckage of a smashed and overturned wagon lies in the grass south of the general store. A hill giant working for Willifer



destroyed the wagon, leaving behind a few crates of supplies (candles, torches, rope, waterskins, and the like). A character who searches the wreckage finds 50 gp in a pouch, which the giant overlooked.

Development

If the characters avoid the monsters, they can slip into Ardore unseen. The four most prominent buildings in town are the vicar's residence (abandoned), the Twisted Whistle tavern (abandoned), the Cat's Tail inn, and the temple of Erathis. The latter two buildings are described briefly in the "Ardore" sidebar. Both are sealed up tight, although characters can persuade the inhabitants to let them in with a successful DC 19 Diplomacy check.

Characters who question townsfolk can learn the following information.

- A coven of witches used to gather on a hilltop a few miles south of town. There, they summoned demons and performed secret rituals that created animated scarecrow servants. The local vicar of Erathis wrote a letter to the duke, begging him to intervene. Adventurers in the duke's employ arrived shortly thereafter and killed the witches during the witches' unholy revelry. Locals refer to the hill as Cackle Hill.
- One of the adventurers, an artificer named Alastair Gray, retired to Ardore. A short time later, a plague swept through town, claiming the lives of every child under the age of thirteen. It is widely believed that the plague was a curse. The vicar was overcome with guilt and hanged himself. His family, along with many others, fled to escape further misfortune.
- While the townsfolk grieved, Alastair Gray created the first of several small constructs that resembled children. Most people didn't know what to make of the gesture, but the constructs reminded them of what they'd lost. They eventually accepted the children and took them to heart.
- Just as the townsfolk were putting the sadness of the past behind them, the witches returned with their demonic scarecrows and a pair of hill giants to kidnap the clockwork children. Now the witches are demanding that the children's creator be turned over to them. Although he is powerful, Alastair cannot take on the witches by himself, and he is presently in hiding. His modest house is up the road from the temple, but he welcomes no one but devout servants of Erathis.

Not all the clockwork children have been captured. A handful are scattered about town, hidden in various homes. See event 3 for more information regarding the clockwork children.

7 Scarecrow Shamblers (H) Level 10 Minion Brute
Medium fey animate (construct) XP 125 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +7
AC 22, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 21 **Perception** +7
Speed 6 Low-light vision
Immune disease, poison, sleep

Standard Actions

⊕ **Claws** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 11 damage.

Triggered Actions

Toxic Straw (poison, zone) ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: The shambler drops to 0 hit points.
Effect (No Action): The shambler's death creates a zone in a close burst 1 that lasts until the end of the encounter. The zone is lightly obscured, and any creature that ends its turn in the zone takes 10 poison damage.

Str 18 (+9) **Dex** 14 (+7) **Wis** 15 (+7)
Con 15 (+7) **Int** 11 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+5)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common

4 Burned Witches (W) Level 10 Controller
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 500 each

HP 100; **Bloodied** 50 **Initiative** +5
AC 24, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 23 **Perception** +10
Speed 5
Immune disease, poison, sleep; **Vulnerable** 5 fire

Standard Actions

⊕ **Slam** (fire, necrotic) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 2d4 + 7 damage, and ongoing 5 fire and necrotic damage (save ends). While adjacent to the witch, the target cannot save against the ongoing damage.

Force Claw (force) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Ranged 10 (one creature); ongoing 10 force damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends both).

Triggered Actions

Death Curse ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: An enemy within 20 squares of the witch reduces the witch to 0 hit points or fewer.
Effect (Free Action): The triggering enemy takes a -2 penalty to saving throws until the curse is lifted with a Remove Affliction ritual.

Str 8 (+4) **Dex** 11 (+5) **Wis** 11 (+5)
Con 12 (+6) **Int** 12 (+6) **Cha** 14 (+7)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common

4 Scarecrow Horrors (S) Level 10 Soldier
Medium shadow animate (construct, undead) XP 500 each

HP 108; **Bloodied** 54 **Initiative** +12
AC 26, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 22 **Perception** +6
Speed 6 Darkvision
Immune disease, poison, sleep; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant

Traits

☼ **Aura of Decay** ✦ **Aura** 1
Any enemy that starts its turn in the aura is slowed until the start of its next turn.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Claws** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 3d8 + 5 damage.

Claim the Doomed (psychic) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one dazed creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 9 damage plus 3d8 psychic damage, and the scarecrow marks the target (save ends).

Minor Actions

Horrific Countenance (fear) ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)
Attack: Close burst 5 (one creature in the burst); +13 vs. Will
Hit: The target is dazed until the start of the scarecrow's next turn.

Triggered Actions

Putrid Stuffing (necrotic, poison) ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: The scarecrow is first bloodied.
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Close burst 1 (enemies in the burst); +13 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d8 + 9 necrotic and poison damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Str 20 (+10) **Dex** 21 (+10) **Wis** 12 (+6)
Con 20 (+10) **Int** 10 (+5) **Cha** 5 (+2)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common

CLOCKWORK CHILDREN

Though nimble, Alastair's clockwork children are just as fragile as real children, and they have no effective attacks. They are made of sculpted wood with neatly fitted metal joints, painted glass eyes, and hair crafted of colored string. Their facial expressions and voices are created with the aid of illusion magic.

Alastair uses a ritual of his own devising to animate each construct, but he needs a trapped spirit as a ritual component. During the ritual, the spirit is bound to the construct and given instructions to act a certain way. If the construct is destroyed, the spirit is released and returns to its native plane.

The spirits infusing Alastair's clockwork children are nothing more than power sources, and they are incapable of acting against his wishes. For this reason, the clockwork children are unaligned, despite being animated by demonic spirits.

Though each clockwork construct has unique personality traits, all are given the following instructions during the creation process.

1. Do no harm.

2. Politely follow the orders of living creatures as long as those orders do not violate the first instruction.

3. Protect yourself as long as you do not violate the first two instructions.

Event 3: The Demonbinder

Roleplaying Encounter

In this event, the characters meet the inventor of the clockwork children and learn his dark secret. If the players opt to visit Cackle Hill first, skip this event and continue with event 5.

When characters visit Alastair Gray, read:

Up the street from the temple of Erathis, a single-story wooden house sits on a corner amid several humble cottages. The house has shuttered windows and two entrances, one facing each road. Short, rickety flights of steps lead up to the doors, each of which is painted with an arcane symbol.

The symbols on the doors are a warning. Although the symbols are not magical, the doors are magically locked and require a DC 27 Athletics check to force open. The same is true for the window shutters. In addition, if either door is forced open, an air elemental (*Monster Manual*® 3, page 80) appears in the nearest space adjacent to the door and attacks the creature that forced it, fighting until slain. Only one elemental can be summoned in this fashion.

Alastair doesn't want anyone to learn his secret, so he's reluctant to talk. The only exceptions are Marna Devasky, the blind priestess of the local temple, and anyone else who claims to serve Erathis.

If the characters gain entry, read:

The house is modestly furnished, with little in the way of decor. A small front room contains a wooden table surrounded by chairs, an upholstered couch and matching chair, end tables, and a stuffed bookcase tucked in an alcove. The larger back room contains three beds, a plain wooden cabinet, a desk, a neatly organized workshop (including a table with an iron safe beneath it), and a sturdy desk. Behind the desk is a stone hearth. The floor throughout is made of bleached wood, and oil lamps hang from the rafters on thin metal chains.

The house is home to the human artificer (**A**) and three of his clockwork children (**C**).

Alastair Gray

Alastair Gray is a smart, attractive, wealthy man in the prime of his life. He cares more about his arcane research than developing long-term friendships. He abandoned his adventuring career and took up residence in Ardore to study Cackle Hill, sensing the presence of powerful abyssal energy there.

For a wizard, Alastair is surprisingly devout. Erathis is the divine patron of inventors and artifice, and Alastair thanks her every day for the gifts and knowledge she has imparted to him.

The wizard keeps the key to his desk hidden in a secret pocket on his person. Finding this pocket requires a successful DC 25 Perception check.

Characters who question Alastair can learn the following information:

- "A coven of witches used to gather on a hilltop a few miles south of town. Locals refer to the place as Cackle Hill. My companions and I were hired by the duke to quell their threat. We attacked the hilltop during one of the coven's gatherings, slew the witches, destroyed their animated scarecrows, and burned the remains."
- "On the night of the attack, the witches were performing some kind of ritual and chanting to a demon they referred to as 'the Dark Prince.' I assumed they were referring to the demon lord Graz'zt."
- "I decided to settle down in Ardore. I haven't seen my companions since they left town to collect their reward. Not long after they departed, all the young children in Ardore fell ill and died in a matter of days. The vicar succumbed to grief and hanged himself, while many others fled. I think that one or more of the witches survived the attack and placed a curse on the town."

Characters can learn Alastair's secret by earning his trust, reading his private research notes, or analyzing the *demonbinder* (see "Treasure").

Clockwork Children

Alastair has three clockwork children in his home. Two of them (resembling a nine-year-old human girl and a twelve-year-old human boy) are inanimate and only partially complete, lying atop the neatly made beds in the back room. The third construct (resembling a ten-year-old halfling girl) is not only complete but also animate. Alastair has taken to calling the construct "Lilian," and she is particularly shy.

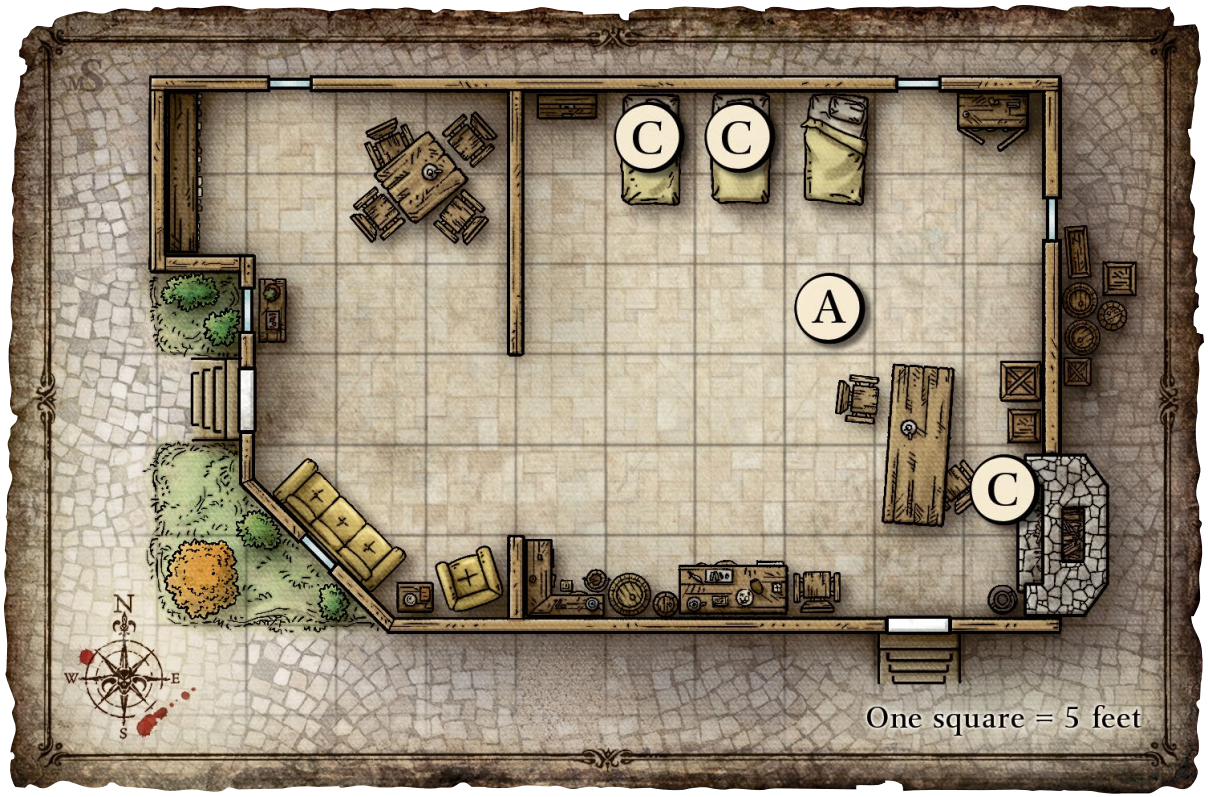
Alastair's dark secret is the *demonbinder*, a handheld arcane contraption he built to capture demonic spirits. After bringing these spirits back to his residence, he traps them within his clockwork children, imbuing them with a semblance of life. To him, this process is not a malevolent act, since the clockwork children are incapable of harming anyone and the demonic spirits are bound by magic to do as Alastair commands. From a certain point of view, he is correct. The clockwork children pose no threat to the town, and if one is destroyed, its demonic spirit returns to the Abyss.

Alastair acts out of guilt. Many children died as a result of his party's carelessness. Although his intentions are good, he does not want the townsfolk to know the truth about his clockwork constructs, lest he and they be shunned (or worse).

Features of the Area

Bookcase: The bookcase contains scores of leather-bound tomes. Most of the books are unremarkable, but seven of them are valuable and can be sold to an interested buyer for 100 gp each.

Desk: Alastair's desk has a drawer containing his research notes, scribbled on pieces of parchment. The drawer has a particularly complex locking mechanism, requiring a successful DC 26 Thievery



check to disable. If the check fails by 5 or more, or if the drawer is forced open, magical fire engulfs the drawer's contents, reducing the notes to ash. This trap cannot be disarmed from outside the drawer.

Alastair's notes include the following entries:

- *The hill is a place of great power, its natural beauty concealing a small, dark portal through which the energies of the Abyss bleed. I have determined that the planar breach is strongest on nights of the new moon. The witches understood the true power of that place.*
- *Curse these lifeless creations. I've tried to imbue the constructs with a childlike awareness, but the magic won't hold. I am forced to give up this pursuit for now, though it pains me to do so. Methinks the good people of Ardore have suffered long enough.*
- *I have built a device that can trap a demon's essence. Its spirit, if you will. I will put it to the ultimate test atop the hill. If I'm right, I may yet find a way to give these clockwork constructs a semblance of life. I shall harness evil for the greater good. Demons beware!*

Wardrobe: The wardrobe contains a traveling cloak, a pair of boots, and various outfits sized for a human male of average height and build. A trunk at the foot of the wardrobe holds an assortment of children's clothes, which Alastair uses to dress his clockwork constructs.

Treasure

Alastair's workshop contains tools and materials for building his constructs, as well as three flasks of level 11 *alchemist's essence* (acid, lightning, and cold; *Mordenkainen's Magnificent Emporium*, page 130).

The locked iron safe under Alastair's worktable is of dwarven make. It weighs five hundred pounds and is too sturdy to break open. The locking dial sports numbers from 1 to 26, each number corresponding to a letter of the alphabet. Unlocking it requires three standard actions and the correct combination, or three consecutive successful DC 27 Thievery checks.

The seven-digit combination is E-R-A-T-H-I-S, or 5-18-1-20-8-9-19. Lilian saw Alastair open the safe once, but she can remember only the first three digits. The safe contains the *demonbinder* and an unlocked wooden coffer containing Alastair's personal wealth: 120 pp, 250 gp, and a *survivor's belt* (*Mordenkainen's Magnificent Emporium*, page 80).

Demonbinder Level 13 Rare

This handheld contraption glows in the presence of demons and traps portions of their essence.

Wondrous Item 17,000 gp

Property

The *demonbinder* glows as bright as a torch when any demon is within 10 squares of it.

Attack Power ✦ Daily (Standard Action)

Attack: Ranged 5 (one demon, either bloodied or in spirit form); +16 vs. Will

Hit: The target is removed from play and trapped in the *demonbinder*.

Miss: This power is not expended.

Utility Power ✦ At-Will (Standard Action)

Effect: You banish a demon trapped in the *demonbinder* back to the Abyss.

Conclusion

After the characters have a chance to interact with Alastair Gray and hear his side of the story, demons sent by Willifer Harmuga to slay the artificer finally locate their quarry. Continue with event 4.

Alastair Gray, Human Artificer (A) Level 14 Leader
Medium natural humanoid XP 1,000

HP 91; **Bloodied** 45; **Healing Surges** 9 **Initiative** +9
AC 28, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 24 **Perception** +13
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊕ ***+3 Rod of Smiting*** (force, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +19 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 10 damage, plus 3d10 force damage on a critical hit.

Shock (implement, lightning) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +17 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8 + 6 lightning damage, and the target is dazed until the end of Alastair's next turn.

Radiant Motes (implement, radiant) ✦ **Recharge** ⚅
Attack: Close burst 3 (enemies in the burst); +17 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8 radiant damage, and the target is blinded (save ends).
Each Failed Saving Throw: The target takes 5 radiant damage.

Minor Actions

Forceful Weapon (force, implement) ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)
Effect: Close burst 5 (one melee or ranged weapon). The target is imbued with force energy. Until the end of Alastair's next turn, the weapon deals 1d10 extra force damage on a hit.

Sudden Infusion ✦ **2/Encounter**
Effect: Close burst 5 (Alastair or one ally in the burst). The target gains temporary hit points equal to its healing surge value.

Skills Arcana +18, Diplomacy +15, Insight +13
Str 11 (+7) **Dex** 15 (+9) **Wis** 13 (+8)
Con 14 (+9) **Int** 22 (+13) **Cha** 16 (+10)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Abyssal, Common, Infernal
Equipment *+3 rod of smiting* (*Mordenkainen's Magnificent Emporium*, page 49)

3 Clockwork Children (C) Level 10 Minion Skirmisher
Small natural animate (construct) XP –

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +8
AC 24, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 22 **Perception** +5
Speed 5
Immune charm, disease, fear, poison

Traits

Elusive
The child has a +4 power bonus to all defenses against opportunity attacks.

Str 10 (+5) **Dex** 13 (+6) **Wis** 10 (+5)
Con 10 (+5) **Int** 8 (+4) **Cha** 12 (+6)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Abyssal, Common

Event 4: Knock, Knock

Combat Encounter Level 11 (3,200 XP)

In this event, the characters encounter four babau demons that Willifer has sent to slay Alastair Gray. The encounter takes place at Alastair's house shortly after event 3. If the characters are not inside the house when the demons arrive, adjust the read-aloud text as necessary.

When the demons arrive at the house, read:
A long, drawn-out scratching sound suddenly rises outside the house. Then comes another scratching, and another. Several creatures are raking the walls with their claws as a low chanting begins to rise.

Four babau demons surround the house, clawing at the walls and whispering in Abyssal, "Come out and die!" If no one obliges them, they break in. The demons don't know who they're looking for, so they attack any characters they see.

Alastair Gray initially assumes that the house is surrounded by animated scarecrows. When he realizes that the threat is demonic, he moves to the iron safe and spends the next 3 rounds opening it to bring out the *demonbinder*.

The clockwork child Lilian hides in the hearth and stays out of harm's way.

Development

If the characters protect Alastair, the artificer is grateful and offers the following insights either during or after the fight.

"Cackle Hill has strong ties to the Abyss. I suspect the demons were summoned there by whoever wants me dead."

If characters ask Alastair why the witches and demons are after him, he adds:

"I built the clockwork children to help the townsfolk overcome their grief, but the witches . . . they want the town to suffer. They see me as their enemy."

If Alastair believes that he can trust the characters to keep his secret, he shows them the *demonbinder* and shares the following information.

"I tried to imbue my clockwork creations with a semblance of life, but it didn't work. Then one night, I had a dream. I was standing atop Cackle Hill, surrounded by a ring of clockwork children. I awoke with the realization that I could use the bound spirits of demons to empower my constructs—not for evil but for good. I built this device to capture demonic spirits atop Cackle Hill, then brought them here and bound them within my clockwork children.

"The demon spirits are powerless inside the constructs. They can do no harm and are compelled to do as I have commanded. I assure you, the children pose no danger to the town. Even if the spirits are released, they must return to the Abyss.

"I would see the clockwork children that have been taken returned safely, with your help."

Alastair is willing to accompany the characters to Cackle Hill and confront the evil that threatens Ardore. If the characters bring him, Alastair takes the *demonbinder* and dons the *survivor's belt* locked in the iron safe. If the characters don't want him along, Alastair loans them the *demonbinder* and *survivor's belt* on the condition that they rescue as many clockwork children as possible. If the characters agree to help recover the children, they gain the following quest.

SAVE THE CHILDREN
10th-Level Minor Quest (25 XP/Character/Child)

The characters receive this quest reward for each clockwork child safely returned to Ardore.

4 Babaus	Level 13 Skirmisher
Medium elemental humanoid (demon)	XP 800 each
HP 127; **Bloodied** 63	**Initiative** +13
AC 26, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 24	**Perception** +10
Speed 7	Darkvision
Resist 5 acid	
Traits	
☼ **Protective Slime** (acid) ✦ **Aura** 1	
Any enemy in the aura that hits the babau with a melee attack takes 5 acid damage.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Bite** (acid) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 3 damage. The target also takes ongoing 5 acid damage, or ongoing 10 acid damage if the babau is bloodied (save ends).	
⊕ **Claws** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 3 damage, and the babau can shift 1 square.	
⸸ **Babau's Advantage** ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: The babau uses *bite* and *claws* against a creature granting combat advantage to it.	
Minor Actions	
Murderous Abduction (teleportation) ✦ **Recharge** when the babau reduces an enemy to 0 hit points or fewer	
Effect: The babau teleports one creature adjacent to it up to 7 squares and then teleports to a square adjacent to that creature. The creature grants combat advantage to the babau until the end of the babau's next turn.	
Triggered Actions	
Variable Resistance ✦ **2/Encounter**	
Trigger: The babau takes acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage.	
Effect (Free Action): The babau gains resist 20 to the triggering damage type until the end of the encounter or until it uses *variable resistance* again.	
Skills Athletics +14	
Str 17 (+9) **Dex** 21 (+11) **Wis** 19 (+10)	
Con 15 (+8) **Int** 12 (+7) **Cha** 14 (+8)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal	

Event 5: Chase on the Hill

Combat Encounter Level 9 (2,000 XP)

In this event, the characters travel to Cackle Hill and encounter several clockwork children trying to flee their evil captors. The characters begin the encounter along the north edge of the map.

As the characters approach the hill, read:
From a distance, Cackle Hill looks peaceful enough, its grassy slopes dotted with trees that have begun to cast off their brilliant leaves. At the foot of the hill, several small figures—clockwork children clad in simple clothes—dart through the brush, running toward you. Chasing after them is a gaunt figure covered in black wrappings. In a raspy voice the figure shouts, "Stop, you little demons!"

The eight clockwork children (**C**) have escaped from the guards atop Cackle Hill and are fleeing toward town (see event 3 for statistics if it becomes necessary.) A burned witch (W) chases after them. In addition, three invisible will-o'-wisps (I) haunt the hillside, though they are not allied with Willifer or her servants.

At the start of each of its turns, the burned witch uses *force claw* to capture and destroy a clockwork child. A character who attacks the witch receives its undivided attention until the end of the encounter.

The will-o'-wisps attempt to feed on the life force of living creatures, ignoring the burned witch and the clockwork children in favor of attacking the characters. If two will-o'-wisps are slain, the third goes dark and flees.

Conclusion

Combat on the hillside does not alert the creatures on the hilltop (see event 6) unless the characters use powers that generate loud noise or have effects that can be seen clearly from 500 feet away.

3 Will-o'-Wisps (I) Level 10 Lurker
Small fey magical beast XP 500 each

HP 57; **Bloodied** 28 **Initiative** +15
AC 24, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22 **Perception** +11
Speed 0, fly 6 (hover; maximum altitude 2)

Traits

Fey Light
A will-o'-wisp can give off light as a torch or extinguish this light as a free action. Fey light must be on for the will-o'-wisp to make any attack. When giving off no light, the will-o'-wisp is invisible.

Insubstantial
The will-o'-wisp takes half damage from all attacks, except those that deal force damage.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Glimmer Wisp** (radiant) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +13 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + 11 radiant damage.

⸸ **Spirit Drain** (healing, psychic) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Melee 3 (one bloodied living creature); +13 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d8 + 9 psychic damage, and the target is weakened (save ends). Additionally, the will-o'-wisp regains 14 hit points.

Luring Glow ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Close burst 20 (one creature in the burst that can see); +13 vs. Will
Hit: The will-o'-wisp pulls the target up to 3 squares, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Triggered Actions

Blink Out (teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: An attack misses the will-o'-wisp.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The will-o'-wisp extinguishes its *fey light* and teleports up to 5 squares.

Skills Stealth +16
Str 4 (+2) **Dex** 22 (+11) **Wis** 12 (+6)
Con 13 (+6) **Int** 8 (+4) **Cha** 18 (+9)
Alignment evil **Languages** Elven

Burned Witch (W) Level 10 Controller
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 500

HP 100; **Bloodied** 50 **Initiative** +5
AC 24, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 23 **Perception** +10
Speed 5
Immune disease, poison, sleep; **Vulnerable** 5 fire

Standard Actions

⊕ **Slam** (fire, necrotic) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 2d4 + 7 damage, and ongoing 5 fire and necrotic damage (save ends). While adjacent to the witch, the target cannot save against the ongoing damage.

Force Claw (force) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Ranged 10 (one creature); ongoing 10 force damage and the target is immobilized (save ends both).

Triggered Actions

Death Curse ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: An enemy within 20 squares of the witch reduces the witch to 0 hit points or fewer.
Effect (Free Action): The triggering enemy takes a -2 penalty to saving throws until the curse is lifted with a Remove Affliction ritual.

Str 8 (+4) **Dex** 11 (+5) **Wis** 11 (+5)
Con 12 (+6) **Int** 12 (+6) **Cha** 14 (+7)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common

Event 6: Bride of Graz'zt

Combat Encounter Level 16 (7,400 XP)

In a final showdown, the characters confront Willifer's allies atop Cackle Hill. As the battle carries on, the witch appears, clad in a wedding gown and madly claiming to be the bride of Graz'zt.

As the characters approach the hilltop, read:
Trees turning from green to vibrant orange, yellow, and red dot the hilltop between outcroppings of rock. A rotting toppled trunk rests in the middle of a clearing covered with trampled grass and scattered bones. Two fat hill giants sit on opposite sides of the clearing, picking through sacks of food. Several clockwork children can be seen in the shadows beneath the trees, guarded by skeletal demons and black-clad witches.

The hilltop is guarded by three burned witches (**W**) under Willifer's control. They command four babau demons (**B**), a hill giant rockthrower (**R**), and a hill giant smasher (**S**). Four clockwork children (**C**) are also here, too frightened to run away (see event 3 for their statistics).

The clockwork children pose no threat. A character can encourage one child to flee with a successful DC 13 Diplomacy check or Intimidate check made as a minor action. If the check is made as a standard action, or if a minor action check succeeds by 15 or more, all the children flee.

Features of the Area

Fallen Tree: This rotten tree trunk is difficult terrain. It is infested with termites, worms, centipedes, spiders, and other harmless vermin, which spill out if the tree is disturbed or set ablaze.

Rocky Outcroppings: The outcroppings are difficult terrain.

Development

When all three burned witches are destroyed, Willifer Harmuga appears.

When the last burned witch falls, read:
A horrible cackling fills the air as a serpentine cloud of ash erupts from the hillside and coalesces into a venerable human female. The crone wears a white witch's hat, a tattered wedding gown, and an amulet made from a demon's horn. She flaps her arms as though she had wings, revealing the extra finger on each of her hands.

"I am betrothed to the Dark Prince!" she screeches. "What have you done to my bridesmaids?"

Willifer appears on the edge of the map. The mad witch truly believes she is the bride of Graz'zt, and there is no reasoning with her. She is a chatty antagonist, hurling epithets and shouting, "Curse you, your children, and your children's children! To the Abyss with you!" When cornered, she uses *transform into ash* to become a cloud of ash and burning embers, then shifts to a safer corner of the battlefield.

When Willifer dies, read:
The crone lets out a horrible shriek, falls to the ground, and turns to dust. Only her tattered bridal gown, the white witch's hat, and the demon-horn talisman are left behind.

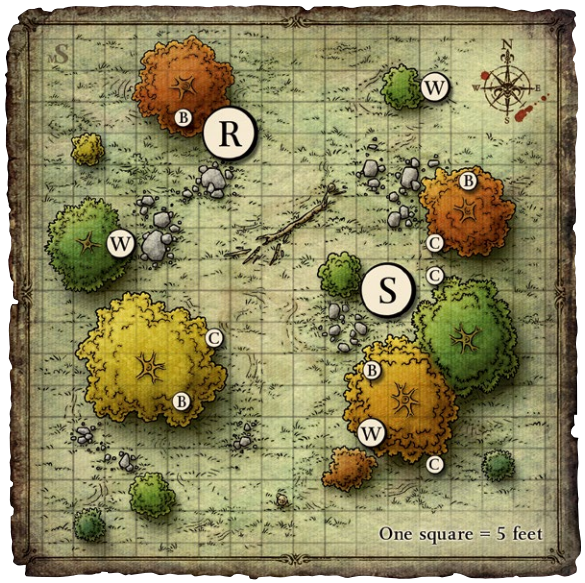
Development

If the adventurers came to Cackle Hill before seeking Alastair Gray, they can return to Ardore to undertake event 3 and event 4 after completing this event. As she dies, Willifer shrieks that her other demonic servants will soon arrive in Ardore, ready to exact her revenge against the creator of the constructs, then lay waste to the town.

Treasure

Each giant carries a large sack that contains food (shanks of uncooked meat, wheels of moldy cheese, rotting apples, and other unsavory treats) and treasure. The rockthrower's sack contains 2,300 cp, 1,800 sp, 550 gp, and a desiccated dwarf corpse wearing a suit of +3 *scale armor of escape* (*Mordenkainen's Magnificent Emporium*, page 12). The smasher's treasure sack contains 1,700 cp, 1,200 sp, a gold chamber pot set with gems (750 gp), and a dwarf-crafted +3 *warhammer of defense* (*Mordenkainen's Magnificent Emporium*, page 34).

Willifer's talisman is a +3 *demon amulet* (*Adventurer's Vault 2*, page 66).



Hill Giant Smasher (S) Level 11 Brute
Large natural humanoid (giant) XP 600

HP 137; **Bloodied** 68 **Initiative** +7
AC 23, **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 23 **Perception** +8
Speed 8

Traits

Mobility
At the start of each of its turns, the smasher can make a saving throw against one effect that a save can end. The effect must include the immobilized, restrained, or slowed condition.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Greatclub** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +16 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 10 damage, and a different enemy adjacent to the smasher takes 7 damage.

⸸ **Brutal Smash** (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** if the power misses
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +16 vs. AC
Hit: 4d10 + 14 damage.

✧ **Whirling Crush** (weapon) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Close burst 2 (enemies in the burst); +16 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 8 damage.

Triggered Actions

⸸ **Persistent Smash**
Trigger: The smasher drops to 0 hit points.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The smasher moves half its speed and uses *greatclub*.

Skills Athletics +15
Str 21 (+10) **Dex** 14 (+7) **Wis** 16 (+8)
Con 17 (+8) **Int** 7 (+3) **Cha** 11 (+5)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Equipment hide armor, greatclub

4 Babaus (B) Level 13 Skirmisher
Medium elemental humanoid (demon) XP 800 each

HP 127; **Bloodied** 63 **Initiative** +13
AC 26, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 24 **Perception** +10
Speed 7 Darkvision
Resist 5 acid

Traits

☼ **Protective Slime** (acid) ✦ **Aura** 1
Any enemy in the aura that hits the babau with a melee attack takes 5 acid damage.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Bite** (acid) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 3 damage. The target also takes ongoing 5 acid damage, or ongoing 10 acid damage if the babau is bloodied (save ends).

⊕ **Claws** ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 3 damage, and the babau can shift 1 square.

⸸ **Babau's Advantage** ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The babau uses *bite* and *claws* against a creature granting combat advantage to it.

Minor Actions

Murderous Abduction (teleportation) ✦ **Recharge** when the babau reduces an enemy to 0 hit points or fewer
Effect: The babau teleports one creature adjacent to it up to 7 squares and then teleports to a square adjacent to that creature. The creature grants combat advantage to the babau until the end of the babau's next turn.

Triggered Actions

Variable Resistance ✦ **2/Encounter**
Trigger: The babau takes acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage.
Effect (Free Action): The babau gains resist 20 to the triggering damage type until the end of the encounter or until it uses *variable resistance* again.

Skills Athletics +14
Str 17 (+9) **Dex** 21 (+11) **Wis** 19 (+10)
Con 15 (+8) **Int** 12 (+7) **Cha** 14 (+8)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal

Willifer Harmuga, Witch Level 12 Elite Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 1,400

HP 180; **Bloodied** 90 **Initiative** +6
AC 26, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 25 **Perception** +10
Speed 5
Resist 10 fire (granted by *+3 demon amulet*)

Standard Actions

⊕ **Caustic Touch** (acid) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 10 acid damage, and ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends). While adjacent to Willifer, a creature cannot save against the ongoing damage.

⊗ **Telekinetic Slam** (force) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +17 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d6 + 10 force damage.

Double Attack ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Willifer makes two basic attacks.

✲ **Baleful Transformation** (polymorph) ✦ **Recharge** ⚅
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (enemies in the burst); +17 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The target is stunned and assumes the form of a harmless, Tiny natural beast (save ends both).

Triggered Actions

Transform into Ash ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: Willifer is hit by an attack.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Willifer becomes insubstantial, shifts up to 10 squares, and reverts to her true form.

Skills Arcana +14, Religion +14
Str 10 (+6) **Dex** 11 (+6) **Wis** 8 (+5)
Con 12 (+7) **Int** 16 (+9) **Cha** 19 (+10)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Equipment wedding gown, *+3 demon amulet*, white witch's hat

3 Burned Witches (W) Level 10 Controller
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 500 each

HP 100; **Bloodied** 50 **Initiative** +5
AC 24, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 23 **Perception** +10
Speed 5
Immune disease, poison, sleep; **Vulnerable** 5 fire

Standard Actions

Slam (fire, necrotic) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
Hit: 2d4 + 7 damage, and ongoing 5 fire and necrotic damage (save ends). While adjacent to the witch, the target cannot save against the ongoing damage.

Force Claw (force) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Ranged 10 (one creature); ongoing 10 force damage and the target is immobilized (save ends both).

Triggered Actions

Death Curse ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: An enemy within 20 squares of the witch reduces the witch to 0 hit points ot fewer.
Effect (Free Action): The triggering enemy takes a -2 penalty to saving throws until the curse is lifted with a Remove Affliction ritual.

Str 8 (+4)	**Dex** 11 (+5)	**Wis** 11 (+5)
Con 12 (+6)	**Int** 12 (+6)	**Cha** 14 (+7)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common

Hill Giant Rockthrower (R) Level 12 Artillery
Large natural humanoid (giant) XP 700

HP 97; **Bloodied** 48 **Initiative** +10
AC 24, **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 22 **Perception** +9
Speed 8

Standard Actions

Greatclub (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +17 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 4 damage.

Knockdown Throw (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +17 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage, and the rockthrower pushes the target 2 squares or knocks it prone.

Shattering Rockburst (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in the burst); +17 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d8 + 6 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Skills Athletics +17

Str 22 (+12)	**Dex** 18 (+10)	**Wis** 16 (+9)
Con 19 (+10)	**Int** 9 (+5)	**Cha** 14 (+8)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Equipment hide armor, greatclub, 10 rocks

Concluding the Adventure

The threat to Ardore ends with the death of Willifer Harmuga and her servants. Deprived of the witch's leadership, the hill giants flee the area and surviving babau demons return to the Abyss. Any animated scarecrows that survived event 2 remain at large and become wandering monsters in the wilderness. The characters can return to Ingar Talstrom with news of their triumph.

If the characters befriend Alastair Gray, he remains a true and loyal confidante. The artificer might put the characters in touch with his former adventuring companions, or he might help the party with a quest or lead the characters toward another adventure.

Life in Ardore gradually returns to normal, and as long as Alastair's dark secret stays hidden, the clockwork children become welcome additions to the beleaguered community. If other townsfolk learn that Alastair used demonic spirits to power his constructs, they demand that the artificer leave Ardore at once and take his "evil creations" with him.

About the Author

Christopher Perkins is the D&D Senior Producer at Wizards of the Coast. Chris notes that the illustrations and maps for this adventure were commissioned for an altogether different project that never materialized. He thought it would be fun to design an adventure based around them.

King of the Wolves

A D&D adventure for characters of levels 4-6

By Will Doyle

Illustrations by Beth Trott and Tony Foti

Cartography by Jason A. Engle

A killer stalks the frozen wastes of Icewind Dale, preying on the innocent men and women of Ten Towns. Some say it is the Frostmaiden herself, come to earth to punish those who defy her. Others look to the orcs of the mountains, or speak of a madman exiled from the south. To learn the truth, brave heroes must lead the warriors of Ten Towns on a deadly manhunt through Icewind Dale, ending the bloody reign of the King of the Wolves. This D&D Forgotten Realms adventure can be played on its own, or as part of the *Legacy of the Crystal Shard* adventure.

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Background

Numerous barbarian tribes inhabit Icewind Dale. The Tribe of the Wolf has been weakened by time and fate, and it is currently without a king. In the absence of an heir, command of the tribe fell to its foolhardy shaman, Jütti Merliss.

Winter arrived early this year, and the weather drove the barbarians to the very edge of the dale. With scant food to last until spring, Jütti turned to dark gods for salvation. Malar the Beastlord answered her pleas, granting her strongest warrior an opportunity to become his Chosen. Isarr Kronenstrom must now claim ten victims from the Ten Towns, after which Malar shall unleash a terrible monster called Thruun into the world and use it to wreak bloody havoc across the dale. Isarr believes he will become king of his tribe, whereupon his people will live out the winter under the Beastlord's protection.

With eight victims already claimed, Isarr comes at last to the frozen shore of Redwaters and the isolated towns of Good Mead and Dougan's Hole, where he plans to claim two more victims and call forth the monster from the Twenty Stones of Thruun. Only the heroes stand in his way.

Running the Adventure

"King of the Wolves" is set in Icewind Dale during the onset of a particularly cruel winter. For more information on the region, refer to the *Legacy of the Crystal Shard* adventure or read the *Icewind Dale* trilogy by R.A. Salvatore. Although the adventure takes place almost 100 years after the novels, the dale hasn't changed much over time.

Treasure

This adventure uses the treasure parcel system and assumes a 4th-level party composed of five player characters. Treasures are suggested in the text, but you can use the following key to allocate your own parcels.

Parcel 1: Isarr's body (Act 2: Searching the Forest)
Parcel 2: Final Battle (Act 3: Queen of the Wild)
Parcel 3: Hobgoblin Camp (Act 2: Area 3)
Parcel 4: Bear Cave (Act 2: Area 1)
Parcel 5: Isarr's Bounty (see Adventure Hooks)
Parcel 6: The Final Battle (Act 3: Queen of the Wild)
Parcel 7: Hobgoblin Camp (Act 2: Area 3)
Parcel 8: Gorge (Act 2: Area 2)
Parcel 9: Ruined Lodge (Act 2: Area 5)
Parcel 10: Final Battle (Act 3: Queen of the Wild)

Magic items suggested in the text should be replaced by items appropriate for the group.

Adventure Hooks

Use the following hooks to draw the characters into the adventure.

Bounty Hunters

The murders have shocked Ten Towns, and its speakers have joined forces to place a bounty on the killer's head. Despite the worsening weather, sellswords have spread out over the dale. Either by chance or deduction, the characters are the first among them to head for Redwaters.

A purse of 300 gp is on offer for bringing down the killer, or double that if he or she can be brought alive to stand trial in Bryn Shander.

Caravan Guards

Good Mead's speaker has ordered in extra supplies before the weather closes in. The party is hired to escort a wagonload of wicker hives to the beekeepers of Good Mead. With a killer on the loose, they're urged to remain especially vigilant.

Old Friends

An old friend has retired to Good Mead: perhaps a mentor to one of the characters or a close relative. Word has come that this important person is in ill health and might not last the winter, so the characters have taken the opportunity to pay a final visit.

You need to introduce this resident into the community. In a particularly cruel twist of fate, you could even make the person the killer's first victim in Good Mead (see the "Sacrifice" section).

A Killer on the Road

Isarr's victims have been lashed to trees or boulders near their homes, their ribs cracked open to form the grotesque wings of the Blood Eagle. In each case, the victim's hands have also been chopped off and taken.

Such ritualized killings are not unheard of in the north, and they are attributed to those who worship the gods of fury. Nevertheless, panic has spread in place of reason, and the towns are awhirl with rumors. Isarr has moved quickly, so most towns are unaware of exactly how many victims he's claimed.

Allow the party to uncover one or more of the following stories before the characters' arrival in Good Mead. In each case, grant the players a group skill check to determine the rumor's veracity, using the skills listed.

1d6	Rumor
1	**The killer is the Frostmaiden Auril come to wreak vengeance on the unworthy.** *Religion DC 15:* **Unlikely, since Auril's sacrifices are usually left to die of exposure or drowned in icy pools.**
2	**Orcs from the Spine of the World are on the rampage.** *Nature DC 15:* **Orcs have been known to inflict the Blood Eagle on their victims, but they usually take an eye for Gruumsh, not the hands.**
3	**An exiled Luskan prince is making sacrifices to raise an army of demons.** *History DC 10:* **Ten Towners live in constant fear of Luskan bogeymen, so such rumors are common.**
4	**Vengeful barbarians from the Tribe of the Tiger are behind the murders.** *Streetwise DC 15:* **The tribe was recently refused a request to winter in Bremen, so there could be some truth to this.**
5	**The speakers of Bryn Shander and Targos are conspiring to spread panic, allowing them to gather funds for a conquering army.** *History DC 10:* **These speakers couldn't agree on the price of fish, much less conspire for conquest.**
6	**Each victim had defied the Dockworker's Guild in some way.** *Streetwise DC 15:* **The guild seeks to expand its influence beyond the town of Targos, but its agents have never been violent.**

Kendrick Rielsbarrow

Good Mead's speaker is a gentle giant whose hearty nature has earned him many friends across the dale. When the heroes come to Good Mead, Kendrick is likely to be their first contact.

The speaker stands 7 feet tall. He has braided blond hair and arms thick as timbers. Knowing the intimidating figure he cuts, Kendrick makes sure to question all strangers in person.

Kendrick has dealt with the Tribe of the Wolf before, having rescued one of the tribe's children from a bear trap. He is soon to learn that the boy he saved has grown into a vicious killer.

GOOD MEAD

Good Mead huddles on the northwestern shore of Redwaters, some ten miles east of Bryn Shander. A map of Good Mead appears in *Legacy of the Crystal Shard*. The fishers of Good Mead have long since traded hook and line for beehive and fermenting jar, selling their honeyed brew in taverns across Icewind Dale. Good Mead is not known for warm welcomes. Few visitors come this way, and strangers are likely to be taken for bandits. Life on the tundra is hard, especially so in winter, and folk see to their own needs before tending to others'.

Population: 150

Government: An elected speaker governs the townsfolk, as elsewhere in Ten Towns. Kendrick Rielsbarrow has held the position for seven years and is considered a good man for the job.

Inns and Taverns: The great mead hall serves as community hall, tavern, and lodge for the few friendly faces that come this way.

Supplies: The town has little in the way of stores. The dwarf Dangus Stonebones runs a simple smithy from his home, and hunting gear is usually on sale at the weekly market. Most folk here grind their own grain or live on catches from the lake.

Temples: Good Mead's weathered shrine to Tempus is a throwback to its bloodier days, when disputes with nearby Dougan's Hole often spiraled into bloodshed. Now that the mead is flowing, the shrine has fallen into disrepair.

Act 1: The Feast of Stags

The following events take place on the night of the characters' arrival in Good Mead.

When the party arrives at Good Mead, read:

Dark gray skies hang over Icewind Dale. Good Mead is on the frozen shore of Redwaters. The settlement clings to a slope by the water's edge, its buildings hidden behind tall pines. A timber mead hall overlooks the lake, and thick woods to the west stretch away into the mist.

Smoke rises from the chimneys, but the streets are mostly empty. Judging by the voices drifting from the hall, a town meeting could be in progress.

The Offering

Roleplaying Encounter

A heated town meeting is in progress when the characters arrive. The townsfolk have gathered to discuss a strange discovery: three freshly killed elk found on the edge of the village, apparently left as a gift. Such charity is unheard of in Icewind Dale, so the townsfolk are rightfully troubled.

The characters are viewed suspiciously as they approach, but they won't be stopped before Kendrick has spoken to them. Those who've come to visit an old friend should find him or her in the hall alongside the other residents.

When the party enters the mead hall, read:
Good Mead's drinking hall is packed with people. Three dead elk lie on the floor before the fire pit, their bloodied fur caked in melting snow. An enormous man stands next to them, addressing the crowd with a concerned look.

"We cannot accept these gifts," he says, pointing to the elk. "Everything has a price, and whoever left these shall come to claim their due in time!" Murmurs of agreement spread through the hall, though some shake their heads regretfully.

"Winter has come early this year, Speaker Kendrick," calls a woman from the back. "My daughters are going hungry, and you'd leave this bounty for the dogs?" The speaker opens his mouth to reply, but then notices the ripple of disquiet spreading through the hall at your arrival. Spotting you for the first time, he calls out.

"Who are you folk? Was it you left this meat for our tables?"

The characters are now free to question the townsfolk. Try to turn their questions back on them where possible, allowing each player an opportunity to respond in character. The townsfolk are on edge and should have many queries of their own.

Use the following passages to guide your responses to the character's questions.

How did you come by these elk?
A young lad steps forward.

"I found them by the shore when the blizzard lifted," he says. "Fresh kills by the looks of them. Couldn't tell who left them, because the snow covered up any trail."

The boy's name is Pontus, and he is the teenage son of a local trapper. If someone succeeds at a DC 15 Insight check, the characters can sense that Pontus is nervous about the elk—maybe a little scared. If pushed, the boy admits he felt "something evil" watching from the woods when he found the carcasses.

Who do you think left the elk?
Troubled murmurs spread through the crowd.

"It's the barbarians," says an old man. "Those carcasses will be plump with poison."

"Dark elves!"

"Wood spirits trying to trick us into the forest!"

A red-bearded hunter steps into the firelight. "It's Dougan's lot," he growls. "I can feel it. They want us in their debt for the winter. And these strangers are probably spies!"

The red-haired man is Mord, a diehard rival to the neighboring town of Dougan's Hole. Characters must succeed on a DC 10 group Diplomacy check to prove they aren't spies, or Mord will petition Kendrick to have them driven out of town.

A successful DC 15 Nature check finds no signs of poison on the elk. Each has been felled by a single puncture wound to the throat or temple, most likely from an arrow. Whoever killed them was an expert archer and hunter.

Why would your neighbors turn against you?
"Ever wondered why the lake's called Redwaters?" snarls Mord. "It's drunk the blood of our fathers, and their fathers before them. Those wretches from Dougan's Hole have been warring with us ever since we got here."

Kendrick bristles at this. "They've not drawn blood for years!" he says. "Not since we turned this place around. Not since the mead started flowing."

A character who succeeds on a DC 10 History check knows that open conflict between towns is rare, but their rivalry spawns constant plots to win favor in the speakers' council.

What do you know about the recent killings?
"I've heard it's a monster sent from the gods to punish us," says an old dwarf. "This land ain't good for living, so they've sent that thing to drive us from it." A silence settles over the crowd, broken only by crackling of the fire.

The townsfolk have heard about only a few attacks, but the news greatly unsettled them. Use the rumors provided earlier to add more stories if needed.

Feast of Stags

The Feast of Stags is a holy day when the faithful of Malar donate winter supplies to a village of their choosing. If accepted, such gifts exempt the villagers from the cult's bloodier practices. Allow each character a DC 20 Religion check to recall this information.

The townsfolk know little of Malar and nothing of the feast. Kendrick refuses to accept charity from the Beastlord's followers. For others, the gift of food is too good to refuse. Let the characters form their own opinions on the matter and try to sway the crowd.

Conclusion

Unless the characters convince him otherwise, Kendrick has the elk taken out of the village and burned on a pyre. If the characters change his mind, the carcasses are instead moved to a warehouse for storage. Shortly afterward, dissenting townsfolk sneak inside and drag the elk to the pyre. For the following events to occur as written, it is imperative that Isarr's gift is rejected.

The weather has worsened since the characters' arrival, and a wailing blizzard rolls in over the lake. Those who watch the burning of the elk might catch a glimpse of Isarr through the snow. A successful DC 21 Perception check is required to spot the barbarian.

If someone spots Issar, read:
The howling of wolves draws your eyes to the forest. Through the blizzard, you spot a figure standing atop a rocky outcrop, wearing a wolf-headed cloak. A gust of snow swirls between you, and the stranger is gone.

The characters have little chance of catching Isarr in the blizzard. The driving snow makes it almost impossible for pursuers to see where they're going, and the biting cold puts them at serious risk of exposure.

With no chance of hunting tonight, Kendrick invites the characters to dine with him in the mead hall. Visitors rarely come here in winter, and the speaker is keen to hear news from neighboring towns.

Diversion

Level 4 Skill Challenge (700 XP)

Seeing his gifts burn, Isarr swears to make Good Mead bear the brunt of Malar's fury. While Kendrick entertains his guests, the barbarian creeps down to the jetty and sets fire to the fishing boats, using the ensuing panic to carry out his next murder.

When the fire breaks out, read:

The doors burst open and a man rushes in from the blizzard.

"Fire!" he shouts. "They've set fire to the jetty! The boats are ablaze, and Pontus is caught behind the flames!" Behind him, the glow of the burning jetty lights up the dark.

The boats are crucial to the town's livelihood and its people fight hard to preserve them. Among the first to respond, young Pontus has now become stranded at the jetty's far end, with a raging fire spreading between him and the shore. Players must beat the following skill challenge to rescue the boy and save the boats from destruction.

Skill Challenge: Fighting the Flames

At the end of each round, all players participating in the challenge must pass a DC 10 Endurance check or lose 1 healing surge due to smoke inhalation. A character falls unconscious if he or she fails this check and has no healing surges remaining.

Level: 4 (700 XP)

Complexity: 4 (requires 10 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills: Acrobatics, Athletics, Diplomacy, Heal, Nature. Primary skills can be used either to rescue Pontus or to fight the flames. Checks made to rescue the boy don't count toward the challenge. At least two successes are needed to rescue him.

Acrobatics (DC 15, move action; difficulty raises to 22 if the same character tries again after scoring a success): The character hops between the boats, smashing the ice around them and untying any vessels in danger. Characters can use this skill to reach Pontus, but they can't use it to carry him back.

Athletics (DC 15, standard action; each success lowers the DC of all following Athletics checks by 2): The character grabs a bucket and starts dousing the flames. Characters can use this skill to leap through the fire to Pontus, or to carry him back.

Diplomacy (DC 15, standard action; 3 successes maximum): Strong leadership can marshal the townsfolk into effective fire teams. This skill can also be used to calm Pontus and guide him safely through the flames.

Heal (DC 15, standard action; 1 success maximum): The character instructs people on how to protect themselves from the smoke, granting the party a +2 bonus to Endurance checks.

Nature (DC 10, standard action, 3 successes maxmum): An understanding of wind and fire proves helpful in guiding those fighting the fire.

Secondary Skills: Endurance

Endurance (DC 10, standard action): At the end of each round, those participating in the challenge might suffer smoke inhalation. Each character must succeed on a DC 10 Endurance check or lose 1 healing surge, or an amount of hit points equal to his or her surge value if he or she has no surges remaining. This check doesn't count toward the challenge.

Success: Flames are extinguished, and Pontus is led to safety.

Failure: The jetty collapses in flames, killing Pontus if he hasn't already been rescued. Those caught in the collapse take 10 fire damage and plunge through the ice into the lake, taking ongoing 5 cold damage until they are out of the water.

The Sacrifice

Roleplaying Encounter

Isarr claims his ninth victim while the characters are fighting the fire, targeting one of the startled townsfolk as he rushed toward his home. The corpse is discovered after the fire has been dealt with, by which time Isarr is long gone.

Characters recognizing the fire as a diversion might insist on patrolling the town instead. Grant them a fair opportunity to prevent the killing—or perhaps even catch Isarr in the act—but allow the barbarian to escape if possible. If faced with a lone character, Isarr might choose that person as the target. His statistics are provided in Act 2. If characters do confront him at this stage, make sure Isarr drops Kendrick's pendant before escaping. If Isarr is slain, skip to Act 3.

When characters see the victim's body, read:

A corpse has been lashed to an icy rock, furs torn from its back and its hands crudely chopped off at the wrists. Its shoulders have been slashed open to expose the steaming ribs, which have been severed at the spine and torn back into a grotesque mockery of wings. A blood-spattered pendant hangs amid the gore.

Isarr's tracks are rapidly diminishing, but the characters can uncover valuable clues if they act fast.

Corpse: A successful DC 22 Heal check reveals that a hooked blade was used to inflict the wounds, possibly a curved dagger or sickle. A savage wound on the back of the head, as well as scrapes on hands, knees, and face, suggest the victim was killed while fleeing from the killer.

Tracks: A successful DC 15 Perception check reveals tracks indicating that the killer was a tall humanoid. The killer chased the victim a ways, but the killer's initial stride suggests he or she was toying with a much slower victim.

A successful DC 22 Perception check reveals a rusty residue in the snow where the killer knelt down. Isarr's furs are caked in the minerals of Coldstone Creek, which can be identified by Kendrick or Mord.

Pendant: Kendrick gave Isarr this honeybee pendant when he returned Isarr to his tribe, and the barbarian has worn it ever since. The speaker recognizes the pendant if he's present.

When characters speak to Kendrick, read:
"I think I know who the killer is," sighs Kendrick. "I found him as a boy, a young barbarian lad caught in a bear trap. It was a hard winter that year, and we'd all lost friends to raiders. I knew what folk would say if I brought him back here, so I took him to a lodge in the forest, where I nursed him back to health over the winter. Isarr was his name.

"In the spring, I led him back to his people: the Tribe of the Wolf. That pendant you found was my parting gift to him. Every year I'd head out to meet him when the tribe passed by, and he always wore it.

"Over time I saw him change. His people had trained him as a hunter, and he grew mean. Turned out their shaman took him under her wing and she turned him to the worship of evil spirits. I didn't visit him again after that.

"Those elk were probably his way of thanking me, and now he's mad I didn't take them."

Kendrick can offer directions to the old lodge, though he hasn't been there for years.

Protected by his *frostwolf pelt*, Isarr marches through the night to Dougan's Hole. Hunting the killer proves impossible in the snowstorm, so the townsfolk elect to wait until first light and then form a posse. The adventurers are invited to stay overnight in the mead hall and join the posse in the morning.

Night of the Beast

Level 7 Combat Encounter (1,500 XP)

Isarr presses on through the blizzard to Dougan's Hole, where he murders his tenth victim. His duty for Malar complete, he summons the beast Thruun from the standing stones outside the town and sends it to destroy the people of Good Mead.

Light: Dim (embers from fire).

Monsters: Thruun.

Thruun attacks while the party rests in the mead hall, arriving at approximately 4 o'clock in the morning. If everyone is asleep, any character who has a passive Perception of 15 or higher awakens to the barking of dogs in the village.

When Thruun approaches, read:
Hours have passed, and the fire has burned down to its embers. The only sound is the wind's muffled moaning.

Then an inhuman cry echoes from somewhere in the forest. Dogs in the village bark and howl. A moment passes, and then a terrible chill washes over the hall.

Allow characters 1 round to prepare, then read:
Something big pounds through the snow outside the hall. With an earsplitting smash, a section of wall explodes inward, showering broken wood over the floor. A shaggy beast the size of a horse, with apelike arms ending in clawed hands, rears up from the devastation. Its wolfish face has no eyes, just a long row of flaring nostrils. Twenty severed hands dangle from a cord around its neck.

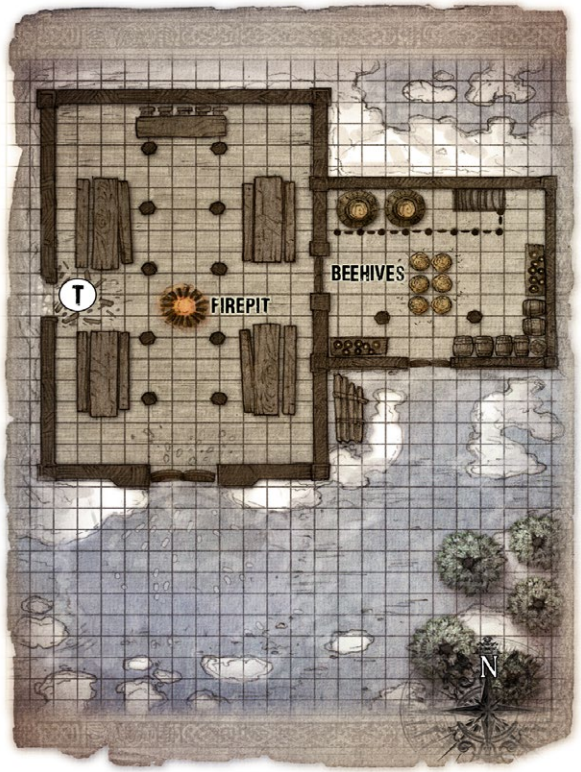
Thruun attacks immediately and without mercy.

Features of the Area

Beehives: Enraged honeybees attack any creature forced into a beehive.

Firepit: The fire is burning low, but its embers still smolder. Any creature forced into the fire or starting its turn inside the fire takes 5 fire damage. A creature can take this damage only once per turn.

Tables and Benches: Thruun's blows send its enemies smashing through the furniture. Characters take 2 damage for each square of furniture they are forced into. Furniture in these squares is then smashed and becomes difficult terrain until it is cleaned up.



Thruun	**Level 6 Solo Brute**
Large immortal beast (blind)	XP 1,250
HP 285; **Bloodied** 142	**Initiative** +6
AC 18; **Fortitude** 19; **Reflex** 17; **Will** 16	**Perception** +10
Speed 8, climb 4	Blindsight 10
Immune blinded, gaze; **Resist** 5 cold	
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 2	

Traits

Regeneration
Thruun regains 10 hit points whenever it starts its turn and has at least 1 hit point. When it takes radiant damage or damage from a silvered weapon, its regeneration does not function on its next turn.

Scattering Bound
On an initiative of 10 + Thruun's initiative check, Thruun jumps up to 8 squares as a free action. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks. Thruun can use *claw* against any enemy adjacent to it when it stops moving. If Thruun cannot use a free action to take this move because of a dominating or stunning effect, then that effect ends instead of Thruun making this move.

Standard Actions

Claw ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature), +12 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage, and Thruun pushes the target up to 2 squares.

Bite ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature), +12 vs. AC
Hit: 2d12 + 4 damage, and the target falls prone. At the end of the encounter, the target makes a saving throw. On a failure, the target contracts Malar's Fury (stage 1).

Bestial Frenzy ✦ At-Will
Effect: Thruun uses *bite* and *claw*.

Triggered Actions

Savage Rebuke ✦ At-Will
Trigger: An enemy scores a critical hit against or bloodies Thruun.
Effect (Opportunity Action): Thruun uses *claw* against the triggering enemy.

Str 19 (+7)	**Dex** 18 (+6)	**Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 19 (+7)	**Int** 6 (+1)	**Cha** 8 (+2)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** understands Common

Conclusion

Thruun explodes into spectral flame when it drops to 0 hit points. The fireball swirls outside the hall and rockets into the sky, heading back to the standing stones at Dougan's Hole.

Shocked townsfolk gather at the hall to hear the party's tale and to examine the devastation. Among them is Kendrick, who arrived in time to witness the last moments of the battle.

After the battle, read:
Kendrick says, "That monster came straight from the Beastlord's hunt, I swear it. You saw the hands hanging around its neck: Isarr's been killing people as offerings to that thing. He's got to be stopped before he kills again—because I don't think that monster's truly dead!"

Kendrick is right. Thruun cannot truly be slain; it slumbers until more sacrifices are made to raise it. Isarr's reign of terror now begins anew.

Malar's Fury	**Level 7 Disease**

The sight of blood brings on maddening visions of the hunt.

Stage 0: The target recovers from the disease.
Stage 1: While affected by stage 1, while a visible bloodied enemy is within 10 squares of the target, the target takes a -2 penalty to attacks that don't include a bloodied enemy as a target.
Stage 2: While affected by stage 2, while a visible bloodied enemy is within 10 squares of the target, the target is considered to be weakened if it makes an attack that doesn't include a bloodied enemy as a target.
Stage 3: While affected by stage 3, while a visible bloodied enemy is within 10 squares of the target, the target is dazed until the start of its next turn if it makes an attack that doesn't include a bloodied enemy as a target.
Check: At the end of each extended rest, the target makes an Endurance check.
9 or lower: The stage of the disease increases by one.
10-15: No change.
16+: The stage of the disease decreases by one.

Act 2: High Hunt

With dawn fast approaching, the townsfolk prepare to hunt Isarr. Having proven their prowess in the fight against Thruun, the characters are recruited to lead the hunt into the forest to track down the killer.

Warriors from the West

Roleplaying Encounter

The brave folk of Dougan's Hole tracked Isarr into the forest. Knowing they'll never catch him on their own, a small group splits off to recruit volunteers from Good Mead. They arrive at dawn, having tracked Isarr through the early hours of the morning.

When the warriors arrive, read:

Barking huskies drag a sled into town from the south. A small group of men and women accompanies it, and they enter town holding up their hands to show they mean no harm.

"We're from Dougan's Hole," one of the men calls out. "There's been a murder, and we're looking for your help catching the scum who did it!"

The speaker is Lund, the leader of the band.

As Lund goes on, read:

"A monster was called up from the stone circle outside our town. Last night, old Helga saw this maniac out in the bliz-zard, singing to them stones. Damn near scared her to death when that thing appeared.

"We mustered, but the monster had bolted and the weather was getting worse. That's when we found Henrik in the snow, all Blood Eagled. Once the storm cleared, we lucked onto that maniac's tracks and followed them into the forest. He's hiding in there right now, I'll wager. Will you help us track him down?"

The Hunting Party

Hungry for revenge, the neighboring towns join forces to hunt down the killer. The characters' victory over Thruun makes them natural leaders for this posse.

In total, there should be three Ten Town hunters (human goons) and two hunting dogs per character in the party. Half come from Good Mead and half from Dougan's Hole. Mord elects to guide those from Good Mead, showing obvious contempt for Lund and his people. In addition, if Pontus is still alive, he asks to join the characters. Kendrick stays at the village, but he promises the hunters a feast if they can catch Isarr.

The rest of Lund's hunters patrol the forest perimeter, hoping to keep Isarr contained. Others have been sent on to Bryn Shander and should return tomorrow with a small army of reinforcements. For today, though, the hunt belongs to the posse.

Human Goon	**Level 2 Minion Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 31
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	**Initiative** +3
AC 15, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 11, **Will** 11	**Perception** +2
Speed 6	
Traits	
Mob Rule	
While at least two other human goons are within 5 squares of the goon, it gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Club** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 5 damage.	
Str 14 (+3) **Dex** 11 (+1) **Wis** 12 (+2)	
Con 12 (+2) **Int** 9 (+0) **Cha** 13 (+2)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common	
Equipment club	

Hunting Dog	**Level 2 Skirmisher Minion**
Small natural beast	XP 31
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	**Initiative** +5
AC 15, **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 12	**Perception** +7
Speed 8	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Bite** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 5 damage.	
Minor Actions	
Circle Quarry ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: The dog shifts up to half its speed.	
Str 11 (+1) **Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 13 (+2)	
Con 12 (+2) **Int** 2 (-3) **Cha** 10 (+1)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

Searching the Forest

Exploration Encounter

The forest is five miles wide and rich in hiding places. Surrounded by enemies, Isarr must use guerilla tactics to stay alive.

When the posse approaches the forest, read:

Thick pine woods blanket the landscape ahead. A line of low crags rises from the heart of the forest, and icy streams meander here and there among the trees. The morning has dawned clear and crisp, and last night's snow lies heavy on the ground. It looks like a good day for hunting.

Players should be encouraged to split the posse up into smaller groups, each containing at least three hunters and their dogs. Groups any smaller than this are too scared to search and must join another group or flee the forest.

DOUGAN'S HOLE
BRYN SHANDER
GOOD MEAD
THE EASTWAY
1 Mile
S
W
E
N

DOUGAN'S HOLE
BRYN SHANDER
THE EASTWAY
GOOD MEAD
1
2
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1 Mile
Thruun
Skuld
Isarr
Trap
S
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Running the Hunt

The hunt is played out using half-hour exploration turns, starting at 6 o'clock in the morning. Use the hex map to track the hunters' progress through the forest.

Give the players a copy of the hex map without the legend. Each hex represents an area roughly half a mile wide. The hunters use horns to communicate, sounding coded blasts to signal danger, request orders, or issue simple commands such as "search north" or "come to me." This allows players to direct hunting groups up to two miles away. Groups beyond this range can still communicate if they're able to send a message down the line.

Hunting groups can move in any order during the turn. Resolve any exploration events as they occur, and then move on to the next group. After every hunting group has taken an action, resolve a secret action for Isarr and then roll for weather (see the "Weather Checks" section). Use the DM's map to record Isarr's trails and mark any traps that he lays.

Playing the Hunters

Grouchy frontiersmen and loud, overzealous hunters make up the posse. Each is eager to claim credit for capturing Isarr, making them prone to grandstanding or rash decision-making. Left unchecked, Mord's rivalry with Lund might also cause trouble on the hunt.

Keep the characters at the forefront of all decisions, allowing them to guide the groups as they see fit. The hunters gladly follow orders, but don't take kindly to being held back from combat or to wasting time.

To keep the game flowing during combat, allow the players to control any hunters in their group. For added flavor, you can have each player roll on the following table to determine character traits for the hunters.

1d10	Hunter Trait
1–4	No distinctive trait.
5	Indecisive. The hunter can take only one action per turn.
6	Slow. The hunter has speed 4.
7	Clumsy. The hunter falls prone if it misses with a melee attack.
8	Armored. The hunter has AC 21 but speed 5.
9	Strong. The hunter deals 2 extra damage.
10	Diehard. Make a saving throw for the hunter if it drops to 0 hit points. If it makes the save, it remains at 1 hit point.

Exploring the Forest

Each hunting group can move into and search a single hex during the turn, as directed by the players. Faster movement is possible, but hampers the group's ability to search effectively.

Speed	Effect
Cautious (1 hex)	+2 bonus to Perception, cannot be surprised
Moderate (2 hexes)	No modifier
Fast (3 hexes)	No searching allowed

Hunting groups that climb into the crags must move 1 hex slower. Such groups cannot gain the bonus for a cautious pace.

Ask the players to roll a search check for each hunting group at the start of its move, using the Perception score of the group's most observant member (if multiple characters are present, they can choose to make a group check instead). The result of the check applies to all hexes that the group searches during its turn. Make the roll even if all the hexes are empty, just to keep players guessing.

Exploration Event	Perception DC
Adventure Location	Automatic
Tracks	DC 15
Bear trap	DC 20
Pit trap/spike trap	DC 22
Isarr's ambush	DC 22

Refer to the sections below for details on each exploration event. Resolve events in secret if characters aren't present, forcing them to guess what's happening by the sounding of horns.

Tracks

Record Isarr's tracks on the DM's map as he moves around. Don't log the townsfolk's tracks, since the noise of dogs and horns is enough for Isarr to pinpoint their positions.

Any group that finds tracks can identify what type of creature left them and where they were headed. Following the trail grants a +2 bonus to the next search check, but only for the purpose of uncovering tracks. Isarr doesn't leave tracks when moving along a stream.

Bear Traps

The posse is armed with one bear trap per every four hunters. Bear traps can be set on the move, but only if the group is moving cautiously.

The bear trap attacks Isarr if he fails to spot it when entering its hex. For simplicity's sake, end Isarr's turn if he gets hit and assume that he frees himself by the start of his next turn. Any hunting groups that move into the hex before then can attack him without risking an ambush (see "Encountering Isarr," below). Isarr is knocked unconscious rather than killed if the trap's attack reduces him to 0 hit points or fewer.

Spike Traps

Isarr fortified his hideout with a ring of spike traps. These were set long before the hunters arrived and are well hidden beneath the snow. Isarr can also spend his exploration turn preparing a spike trap in his hex.

Any hunting group that fails to spot a trap when entering its hex automatically suffers one casualty. Resolve the trap's attack normally if characters are present in the group.

Encountering Isarr

Isarr ambushes (and surprises) any hunting group that fails to spot him when entering his hex. He uses hit-and-run tactics to winnow down his pursuers, attacking from cover and then melting back into the forest. To heighten the tension, he carves threatening messages into his victims' bodies, such as "Leave this place!" or "Blood for the Beastlord!"

Play out Isarr's attacks if player characters are present. Isarr avoids taking on the whole party, and he fights to the death only if cornered. He falls unconscious, instead of dying, if he drops to 0 hit points or fewer. If Isarr is defeated, move on to Act 3.

If Isarr ambushes an NPC group, he inflicts 1d4 casualties (1d4 -2, minimum 0, if the group is moving cautiously) and then withdraws into an adjacent hex. Any surviving hunters sound the alarm, and the group ends its move. If you want to instill some horror into the chase, you can instead have the players play as the NPC hunters.

If an NPC group spots Isarr, he takes 10 damage in the skirmish, and the group takes 1d4 casualties. Until Isarr leaves the area, all other hunting groups have a +5 bonus to notice him when entering the hex or starting their turn inside it.

In any case, Isarr tries to inflict gruesome wounds. Whenever he has time, he leaves victims shaped into the Blood Eagle. Even when in a hurry, he still tries to inflict as much terror as damage.

Isarr never attacks during his own turn, preferring to lay traps or to move away from hunters. If he starts his turn in a hex containing hunters, he must succeed on a DC 16 Stealth check to escape the area unnoticed. If he fails, all the hunting groups have a +5 bonus to notice him on the next turn.

Bear Trap — **Level 3 Trap**
Object — XP 150

Detect Perception DC 21 — **Initiative** –
Immune attacks

Triggered Actions

⚔ **Attack ✦ At-Will**
Trigger: A creature enters the square containing the trap.
Attack (No Action): Melee 0 (the triggering creature); +6 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d6 + 6 damage, and the target is grabbed (Escape DC 21). Every time it fails a check to escape, the target takes 5 damage.
Effect: The bear trap can attack once and then must be reset.

Countermeasures

✦ **Disable:** Thievery DC 9 (standard action). *Success:* The bear trap is sprung harmlessly.

Spike Trap — **Level 3 Trap**
Object — XP 150

Detect Perception DC 21 — **Initiative** –
Immune attacks

Triggered Actions

⚔ **Attack** (poison) **✦ At-Will**
Trigger: A creature enters the square containing the trap.
Attack (No Action): Melee 0 (the triggering creature); +6 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + 4 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).
Effect: The trap is disarmed.

Countermeasures

✦ **Disable:** Thievery DC 9 (standard action). *Success:* The spike trap is sprung harmlessly.

Isarr Kronenstrom — **Level 7 Elite Brute**
Medium natural humanoid, human — XP 600

HP 192; **Bloodied** 96 — **Initiative** +6
AC 19, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18 — **Perception** +10
Speed 8
Resist 5 cold (*frostwolf pelt*)
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

☼ **Lone Hunter of Malar ✦ Aura** 2
If an enemy is the only creature in the aura, then Isarr has combat advantage against that enemy.

Blessing of the Beastlord
Against a bloodied or prone enemy, Isarr scores a critical hit on a natural roll of 19 or 20.

Wolf Tactics
If an enemy is granting combat advantage to Isarr and he hits the enemy with an attack, the enemy falls prone.

Standard Actions

⚔ **Sickle** (weapon) **✦ At-Will**
Effect: Isarr can shift 1 square before or after the attack.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6 + 7 damage

⚔/➶ **Handaxe** (weapon) **✦ At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6 + 7 damage

⚔ **Longbow** (fire, weapon) **✦ At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature), +12 vs. AC
Hit: 2d10 + 6 damage, and if Isarr used a fire arrow, ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Double Attack ✦ At-Will
Effect: Isarr makes two basic attacks.

Triggered Actions

Frostwolf Pelt ✦ Daily
Trigger: An enemy adjacent to Isarr hits him with an attack.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The triggering enemy falls prone.

Skills Athletics +12, Nature +10, Stealth +11

Str 19 (+7)	**Dex** 16 (+6)	**Wis** 15 (+5)
Con 16 (+6)	**Int** 10 (+3)	**Cha** 14 (+5)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common
Equipment leather armor, sickle, 3 handaxes, longbow, 30 arrows, 5 fire arrows, *frostwolf pelt* +2.

Weather Checks

Make a weather check at the end of each exploration phase. The resulting effect lasts for the duration of the following phase.

1d10	Weather Effect
1-7	Clear weather.
8-9	Snow flurries. -2 penalty to Perception checks while searching.
10	Heavy snow. -5 penalty to Perception checks while searching. All tracks currently on the map are obliterated.

Area 1: Bear Cave

Level 5 Combat Encounter (1,000 XP)

A family of bears lives in this cave.

Light: Bright outside, dim in the cave.

Monsters: 5 bears.

Townsfolk enter the cave only if the characters are present. They use their horns to call the party here.

When the characters approach this area, read:

A dark cave opens ahead, its yawning mouth hidden behind a veil of tree roots. Foul odors waft from within, and wet funguses line the opening. A clear trail of footprints leads up to the entrance and then passes inside.

Nature DC 15: The area shows signs of bears, such as scratches on trees, matted fur caught on bushes, and piles of dung.

Perception DC 15: Tracks around the entrance also include those of several bears. (Isarr's trail goes through the cave and emerges from a hidden exit farther up the slope).

Bears attack those who enter the cave. Add a bear for every six NPC hunters present, but don't add any experience points for defeating extra bears.

5 Bears	**Level 5 Brute**
Large natural beast	XP 200 each
HP 80; **Bloodied** 40	**Initiative** +3
AC 17, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 16	**Perception** +3
Speed 8	
Traits	
Devour	
Any creature grabbed by the bear at the start of the bear's turn takes 1d8 + 5 damage.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Claw ✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage.	
⸸ **Bear Grab ✦ Recharge** when first bloodied	
Effect: The bear uses *claw* twice against the same target. If either attack hits, the target falls prone, and the bear grabs the target (escape DC 15) if it has fewer than two creatures grabbed.	
Str 20 (+7) **Dex** 13 (+3) **Wis** 13 (+3)	
Con 20 (+7) **Int** 2 (-2) **Cha** 12 (+3)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

Features of the Area

Ceiling: The cave is 10 feet high throughout. The main entrance stoops to just 5 feet high, and the rear entrance is so narrow that Medium creatures must squeeze to pass through it (larger creatures are too big to fit through).

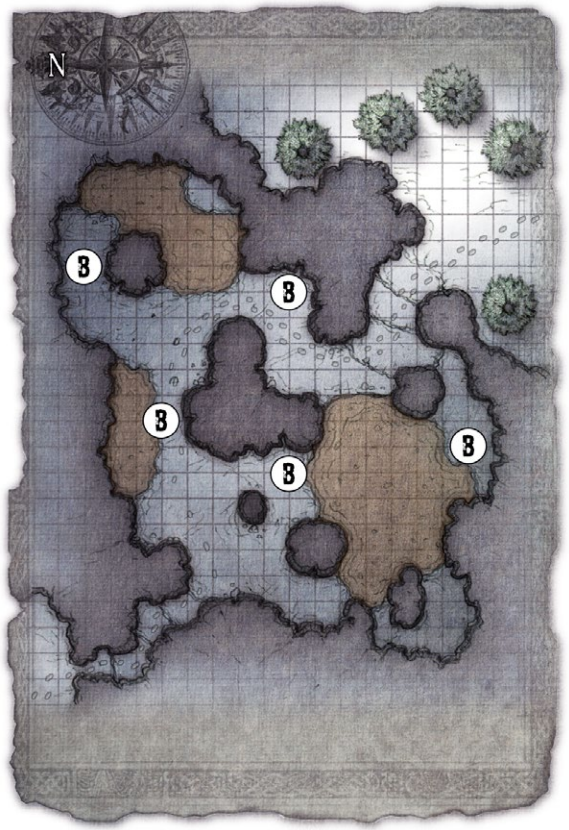
Mud: Much of the cave is swamped by deep, viscous mud that is difficult terrain. In addition, any creature that falls prone in a square of mud is restrained (escape DC 10).

Isarr's Tactics

Allow Isarr to sneak closer and launch an attack if he's within a mile or so of the cave when the characters arrive. Recruits waiting outside could be found hanging from the trees when the party reemerges, or they could be sniped at from afar. Isarr won't enter the cave while the characters are inside, and he makes good use of the nearby stream to cover his trail when he retreats.

Treasure

The bears waylaid a local trapper, whose gnawed bones are now scattered in the cave. Characters searching through the muck can uncover the trapper's battered *lamp of discerning*.



Area 2: Gorge

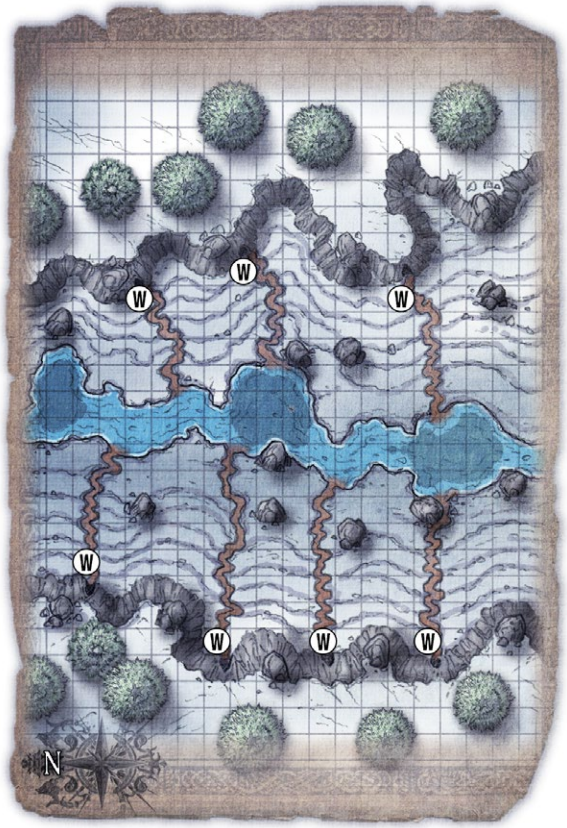
Level 4 Combat Encounter (875 XP +100 XP per rockslide)

Coldstone Creek leaves its mark on anyone passing through its rusty waters. Few venture this close, though, due to the savage wolves living in the gorge.

Light: Bright.

Monsters: 7 gray wolves.

Traps/Hazards: Rockslides (if Isarr is present).



Play this encounter only if the characters are present. If they're not, the wolves are off in the forest when NPC hunters pass by.

When characters enter this area, read:

A river tumbles through a shadowed gorge, crashing over rocks and swirling through pools until it drains off into the forest below. Smaller streams pour into the river from cliffside caves, their water colored red by rusty residue.

Passing through the gorge is the easiest way to reach Isarr's hideout. Characters who spotted the mud at the murder site recognize that it must have come from this river.

Hungry wolves dwell in the caves, their fur stained red from the mineral-rich water. Add an extra wolf for every four NPC hunters present, but don't add any experience points for defeating extra wolves.

7 Gray Wolves	**Level 2 Skirmisher**
Medium natural beast	XP 125 each
HP 38; **Bloodied** 19	**Initiative** +6
AC 16, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13	**Perception** +7
Speed 8	Low-light vision
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⊕ **Bite** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage, or 2d6 + 5 against a prone target. If the wolf has combat advantage against the target, the target falls prone.	
Effect: The wolf shifts up to 4 squares.	
Str 13 (+2) **Dex** 16 (+4) **Wis** 13 (+2)	
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 2 (-3) **Cha** 10 (+1)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

Features of the Area

Cliffs: The rocky cliffs tower 80 feet above ground level. A coating of water and thin ice makes them slick and difficult to climb (Athletics DC 20).

River: Most of the river isn't deep enough to count as difficult terrain, but it is slippery, forcing creatures who traverse more than 3 squares in a single turn to make a DC 10 Acrobatics check or fall prone. The darker pools are 20 feet deep and icy cold.

Rocky Slopes: The slopes on either side of the river are difficult to climb, forcing creatures to expend an extra point of speed per square when moving uphill. A successful DC 15 Athletics check allows a character to treat the slopes as difficult terrain. If a creature falls prone on the slope, it immediately slides 1d6 squares toward the river.

Hunter Tactics

Move Isarr to the gorge if he's nearby when the characters arrive. As they fight the wolves, he appears on the cliffs above to trigger deadly rockslides:

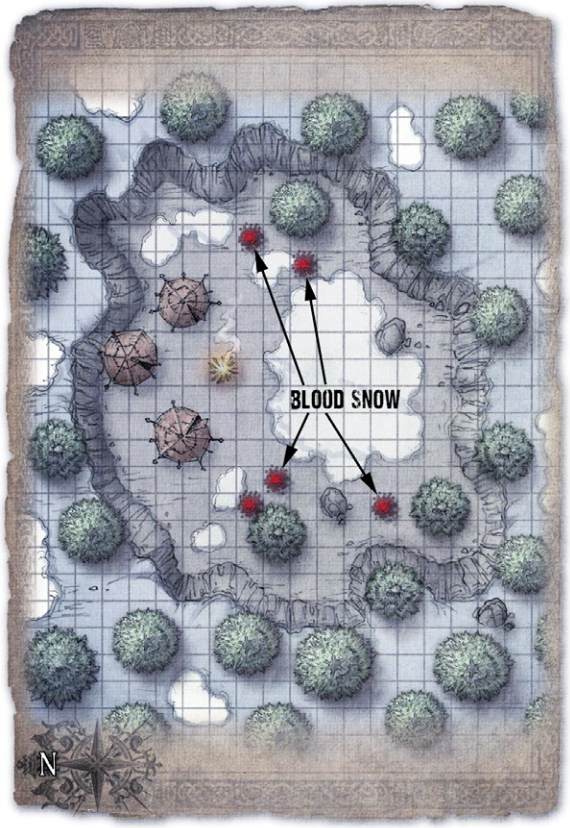
Rockslide	Level 1 Hazard
Terrain	XP 100
Detect Nature or Dungeoneering DC 19	**Initiative** +3
Immune attacks	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⇘ **Attack** ✦ **Recharge** ⚅ ⚄ ⚃	
Attack: Close burst 3 (creatures in burst); +4 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage.	
Miss: Half damage.	
Effect: The area of the burst becomes difficult terrain.	
Special: As soon as the attack fails to recharge, the rockslide is over and does not attack again.	
COUNTERMEASURES	
✦ **Avoid:** A creature that takes damage from the rockslide can use an immediate interrupt to take advantage of natural openings in the slide to avoid damage by making a DC 25 Nature or Dungeoneering check. With a successful check, a creature takes half damage (or no damage if missed).	

Isarr can trigger a rockslide as a standard action from any of the rocky outcrops shown on the map. If his enemies are out of range, he uses his longbow to snipe at them from the top of the gorge, fleeing only if two or more characters scale the cliff.

Treasure

Someone once mined these cliffs, founding a small shrine to Grumbar in one of the caves. It has long since fallen into disrepair, but some treasures can still be found among the debris.

Characters can uncover a set of three stone wine vessels painted with images of prayer and vigilance (25 gp each), a golden bowl trimmed with galloping deer engravings (165 gp), and a fine cauldron etched with images of blacksmiths at work (40 gp).



Area 3: Hobgoblin Camp

Level 4 Combat Encounter (925 XP)

A small band of hobgoblins hides out in the forest, performing blasphemous rites. Given half a chance, Isarr leads his pursuers straight into their camp.

Light: Bright light.

Monsters: 2 bugbear thugs, 1 hobgoblin warmonger, 4 hobgoblin spear soldiers, hobgoblin warcaster.

The hobgoblins camped here inflict 1d6 casualties on any NPC hunting group that moves into their hex. Survivors are forced back into the hex they came from, where they use their horns to sound an alarm. If there were more than five hunters in the hunting group, 1d3 hobgoblin spear soldiers start the encounter bloodied.

When the party approaches the camp, read:

The trees here crowd inward around a natural basin. The air is thick and loamy beneath their boughs. Three yak-skin tents have been pitched on the clearing's far side, next to a campfire. A brace of hares roasts on a spit above the flames.

Place the hobgoblins anywhere inside the clearing. They are not happy to be discovered, and they defend their camp to the death. Add an extra spear soldier for every four recruits present, but don't add any experience points for defeating extra spear soldiers.

Features of the Area

Desecrated Blood Snow: Squares marked in red contain frozen blood and snow where the hobgoblins have performed profane sacrifices over generations using this campsite. The areas are unholy, detectable with a successful DC 22 Arcana or Religion check. A goblin that stands on a square of this snow scores a critical hit on a natural attack roll of 19 or 20. Any other bloodied creature that enters the area takes ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends).

Hunter Tactics

Isarr joins the battle if he's nearby, ideally arriving in the second or third round of combat. Use hit-and-run tactics, having him dart from the tree line to target a lone character or snipe at a character with ranged attacks.

The hobgoblins are equally surprised by the barbarian's appearance. They won't attack him while he's targeting their enemies; they aren't his allies.

Treasure

The hobgoblins' tents contain a number of purloined goods. Characters can find a heavy oak shield with rutting stags engraved on its bronze boss (65 gp), a fine white cloak made from yeti fur (85 gp), a bronze drinking horn embossed with hunting images (45 gp), and a walrus tusk scrimshaw depicting a family seated around a hearth (85 gp). Also among the loot is a *climber's rope*.

2 Bugbear Thugs		**Level 4 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid		XP 175 each
HP 65; **Bloodied** 32		**Initiative** +7
AC 16, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 11		**Perception** +8
Speed 6		Low-light vision
Traits		
Bushwhack		
The bugbear gains a +4 bonus to attack rolls against a creature that has no allies adjacent to it.		
Standard Actions		
⊕ **Morningstar** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d8 + 6 damage, or 3d8 + 6 if the bugbear has combat advantage against the target.		
↣ **Handaxe** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**		
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +9 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d6 + 6 damage.		
Skills Stealth +12		
Str 20 (+7)	**Dex** 20 (+7)	**Wis** 13 (+3)
Con 15 (+4)	**Int** 8 (+1)	**Cha** 10 (+2)
Alignment evil	**Languages** Common, Goblin	
Equipment leather armor, morningstar, 2 handaxes		

Hobgoblin Warmonger **Level 4 Artillery (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid XP 175

HP 46; **Bloodied** 23 **Initiative** +6
AC 18, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16 **Perception** +4
Speed 6 Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊕ **Mace** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage.

➢ **Longbow** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 30 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 7 damage, and the target grants combat advantage until the start of the hobgoblin's next turn.

✲ **Battle Cry** (charm) ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied
Target: Area burst 1 within 10 (enemies in the burst); +9 vs. Will
Hit: The target makes a basic attack as a free action against a creature of the hobgoblin's choice.
Effect: Each ally in the burst can charge or make a basic attack as a free action. If an ally hits with the attack granted by this power, that ally gains 5 temporary hit points.

Move Actions

Phalanx Movement ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The hobgoblin and each ally adjacent to it can shift 1 square as a free action. The allies must end adjacent to the hobgoblin.

Str 15 (+4) **Dex** 19 (+6) **Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 11 (+2) **Cha** 17 (+5)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Goblin
Equipment chainmail, mace, longbow, 20 arrows

4 Hobgoblin Spear Soldiers **Level 3 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid XP 150 each

HP 48; **Bloodied** 24 **Initiative** +5
AC 17, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 15 **Perception** +3
Speed 6 Low-light vision

Traits

Threatening Reach
The hobgoblin can make opportunity attacks against enemies within its weapon's reach (2 squares).

Standard Actions

⊕ **Longspear** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 6 damage.

➢ **Javelin** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 4 damage.

Move Actions

Phalanx Movement ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The hobgoblin and each ally adjacent to it can shift 1 square as a free action. The allies must end adjacent to the hobgoblin.

Triggered Actions

Tactical Withdrawal ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: An enemy enters a square adjacent to the hobgoblin.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The hobgoblin shifts up to 3 squares.

Str 19 (+5) **Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 16 (+4) **Int** 11 (+1) **Cha** 10 (+1)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Goblin
Equipment chainmail, longspear, 6 javelins

Hobgoblin Warcaster **Level 3 Controller (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid XP 150

HP 46; **Bloodied** 23 **Initiative** +3
AC 17, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15 **Perception** +4
Speed 6 Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊕ **Quarterstaff** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 7 damage.

⸸ **Shock Staff** (lightning, weapon) ✦ **Recharge** ⚃ ⚄ ⚅
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 12 lightning damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the hobgoblin's next turn.

➢ **Force Lure** (force) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⚅
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +7 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d6 + 10 force damage, and the hobgoblin slides the target up to 3 squares.

➢ **Force Pulse** (force) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Close blast 5 (creatures in the blast); +7 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8 + 8 force damage, and the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone.
Miss: Half damage.

Triggered Actions

Hobgoblin Resilience ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: The hobgoblin is subjected to an effect that a save can end.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The hobgoblin makes a saving throw against the triggering effect.

Skills Arcana +10, History +10
Str 13 (+2) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 16 (+4)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 19 (+5) **Cha** 13 (+2)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Goblin
Equipment robes, quarterstaff

Area 4: Forest Altar

Roleplaying Encounter or Level 5 Combat Encounter (1,075 XP)

This ancient altar is sacred to the Tribe of the Bear. A lone barbarian journeyed here to commune with the spirits, and he is now mistaken for the killer.

Any NPC group moving into this region captures the barbarian. What happens when the characters arrive depends on whether they got here first, or they were summoned here by the horns of their "triumphant" allies.

Light: Bright light.

Monsters: 1 exiled tribal warrior, 1 dryad hunter, 3 dryad recluses.

When characters approach the altar, read:
A snowcapped altar stands in the middle of this clearing. Primeval forms have been carved into the surrounding pines, showing salmon, bears, and wolves. A dead reindeer calf is laid out on the altar, its blood staining the snow.

Mob Justice

The following events occur if the characters arrive after the barbarian has been caught.

If the barbarian has been caught, read:
A group of townsfolk struggles to hold down a blond-bearded barbarian. A rope has been tied around his neck, and the hunters are about to sling its other end over a nearby tree branch.

"We got the killer!" calls one.

Unless the characters stop them, the hunters proceed to hang the barbarian. If characters question him first, the barbarian says he is Skuld, a member of the Tribe of the Bear, and here to pay tribute to the spirits. Characters who succeed on a DC 15 Insight check are fairly confident he's telling the truth.

Other clues hint at his innocence. Those who spotted Isarr in the blizzard can see that this man isn't dressed the same. Characters who examined the victim's body can tell that Skuld's weapons don't match the wounds. Someone who has seen Isarr knows Skuld isn't the correct person.

Preventing the hanging could earn the hunters' ire, but it saves an innocent man's life. If the characters don't step in to stop the killing, the forest comes alive to save its disciple.

Standoff

Play the following if the characters arrive before Skuld has been caught.

If characters arrive at the altar first, read:
A blond-bearded barbarian dressed in furs stands at the altar. Seeing you approach, he takes up his spear and snarls at you. "This is sacred ground! Leave now, or I shall bless this altar with your blood."

Characters must succeed on a DC 15 Diplomacy check to parley with the barbarian. Those who succeed can question him, but they aren't allowed any closer lest they anger the spirits.

Those who act aggressively find the barbarian true to his word and must fight him. The forest spirits join the fight alongside their outnumbered ally.

Spirits of the Forest

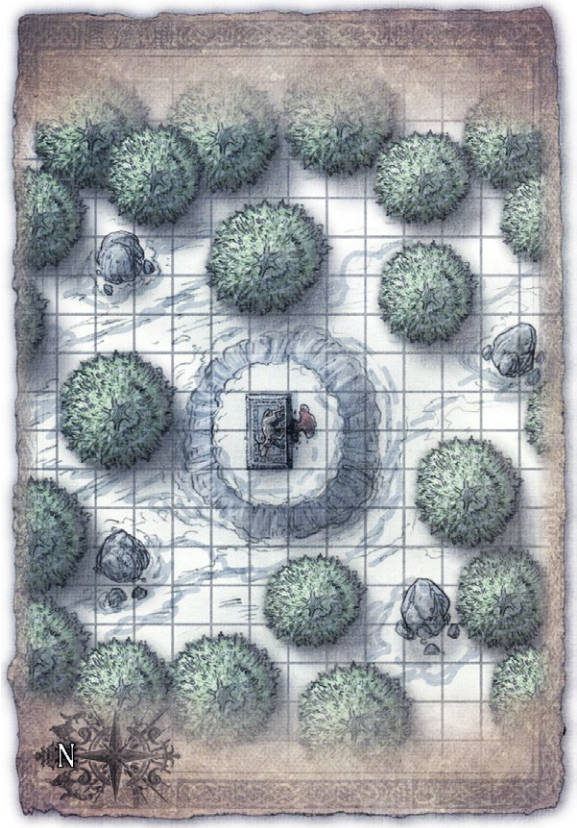
A group of dryads abides in this ancient grove. If they feel their disciple is threatened, the dryads take action to protect him.

When the dryads attack, read:
Female voices suddenly fill the air with song. A beautiful eladrin treads barefoot from the pines and looks at everyone present. More women follow in her wake, singing a chorus that fills your hearts with joy.

The dryads attack at once, using *sylvan charm* to lure the hunters closer and then tearing them to pieces with their claws. They fight to the death.

If he has been captured, Skuld starts the battle bloodied and grabbed by the hunters.

Add an extra dryad recluse for every five recruits present, but don't add any experience points for defeating extra dryads.



Exiled Tribal Warrior	Level 4 Brute
Medium natural humanoid (human)	XP 175
HP 68; **Bloodied** 34	**Initiative** +4
AC 16, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14	**Perception** +3
Speed 6	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Spear** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 6 damage.	
⊕ **Shortbow** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 15 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 6 damage.	
⸸ **Driving Spear** (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** ⚅	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 9 damage, and the target falls prone.	
Skills Athletics +9, Stealth +9	
Str 12 (+3) **Dex** 19 (+6) **Wis** 16 (+5)	
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 12 (+3) **Cha** 13 (+3)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Elven	

Questioning the Barbarian

The characters can glean some information about Isarr if they parley with the barbarian or free him from the lynch mob.

If the characters ask Skuld about Isarr, read:

"The Tribe of the Wolf has no king," says the barbarian. "Halpstaag left no heir when he died, so his shaman took control, a woman called Jütti. They say she turned to dark gods to help the tribe through the winter, and Malar answered her. The Beastlord has promised to make one of her warriors his Chosen, but only if he honors Malar in the high hunt. That is why this man kills—to prove himself to Malar, and to Jütti, his queen-to-be."

This is all the barbarian knows. After the characters depart, he leaves the forest and heads to his people.

Dryad Hunter	Level 7 Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid (plant)	XP 300
HP 82; **Bloodied** 41	**Initiative** +9
AC 21, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18	**Perception** +10
Speed 8 (forest walk)	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Claw** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 6 damage, or 3d8 + 8 if no other enemy is adjacent to the dryad.	
⸸ **Luring Feint** ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: The dryad uses *claw*. If the attack hits, the dryad shifts up to 4 squares, pulling the target with it. If the attack misses, the dryad shifts up to its speed.	
Move Actions	
Treestride (teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**	
Requirement: The dryad must be adjacent to a tree or a Large plant.	
Effect: The dryad teleports up to 8 squares to a square adjacent to a tree or a Large plant.	
Minor Actions	
Deceptive Veil (illusion) ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: The dryad disguises itself to appear as a Medium humanoid (usually a beautiful elf or eladrin) until it uses *deceptive veil* again or until it drops to 0 hit points. Other creatures can make a DC 28 Insight check to discern that the form is an illusion.	
Str 16 (+6) **Dex** 18 (+7) **Wis** 15 (+5)	
Con 18 (+7) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 13 (+4)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Elven	

3 Dryad Recluses	Level 5 Lurker
Medium fey humanoid (plant)	XP 200 each
HP 50; **Bloodied** 25	**Initiative** +10
AC 19, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17	**Perception** +10
Speed 8 (forest walk)	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Claw** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage.	
⚸ **Sylvan Charm** (charm) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +8 vs. Will	
Hit: The dryad pulls the target up to 5 squares to a square adjacent to it. The target is charmed until it is no longer adjacent to the dryad or until the dryad uses this power again. A charmed creature is immobilized and can't attack the dryad. When an enemy's melee or ranged attack hits the dryad, it deals half damage to the dryad and half damage to the charmed creature. If the attacker is adjacent to the charmed creature, the charmed creature must make a melee basic attack (of the dryad's choice) against the enemy as a free action.	
Move Actions	
Treestride (teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**	
Requirement: The dryad must be adjacent to a tree or a Large plant.	
Effect: The dryad teleports up to 8 squares to a square adjacent to a tree or a Large plant. Any creature charmed by the dryad teleports with the dryad to a square adjacent to it.	
Minor Actions	
Deceptive Veil (illusion) ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: The dryad disguises itself to appear as a Medium humanoid (usually a beautiful elf or eladrin) until it uses *deceptive veil* again or until it drops to 0 hit points. Other creatures can make a DC 27 Insight check to discern that the form is an illusion.	
Str 12 (+3) **Dex** 19 (+6) **Wis** 16 (+5)	
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 12 (+3) **Cha** 13 (+3)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Elvenv	

Area 5: Ruined Lodge

Roleplaying Encounter

Many years ago, Kendrick nursed Isarr back to health in this lodge. Now the barbarian uses it as his hideout, returning here each night to rest and pray.

When characters enter this area, read:
An aging lodge stands at the edge of this clearing. Its front door has long since fallen off, and rotten planks have been nailed over its windows.

The one-room lodge has a stone hearth and is bare of furniture, and it's oddly tidy. Isarr is careful to clean up whenever he leaves, and the lodge "spirit" (see that section) is also fastidious.

Lodge "Spirit"

Any search of the lodge reveals a small hole in the wall with a few items, such as a thimble, a few large buttons, and a tiny sword arranged in front of it. To the untrained eye, this hole looks like a mouse hole, but it actually belongs to a lone, somewhat cracked brownie hermit that lives in the lodge.

A successful DC 15 Nature check allows a character to discern the signs that this hole is an entrance to a brownie lodging. Magic about the hole, which leads to the Feywild deep under the lodge, can be discerned with a successful DC 15 Arcana check. The characters can attract the brownie's attention by offering sweets or beverages besides water. A successful DC 15 Diplomacy check, made with a +4 bonus if the character offers entertainment, is also enough to coax the hermit from his hole.

When the brownie emerges, read:
A tiny figure with wild white hair pokes his head from the hole. He steps out cautiously, bare of foot and dressed in simple clothes like folk of the Ten Towns.

"Hallo! What do you want?"

The brownie, named Hennac, likes hearing stories and jokes, and he happily receives gifts of food. If the characters please him, Hennac sticks around to talk to them. Otherwise, he retreats into his hole.

If characters ask about Isarr, read:
"Yes, yes. Wolf man comes here most nights, just before moonrise. Keeps things tidy, that one, so I let him stay. Brings me meat and beer, sometimes, too."

True to Hennac's word, Isarr returns to this lodge just before the moon rises (around nightfall).

Treasure

On the mantle, wrapped in oiled sealskin, are two silver skinning knives (75 gp each), one bone handle carved to depict a wolf, and the other a fish. Hennac says these knives belong to the wolf man.

Act 3: The Killing

With Isarr killed or captured, the hunting party returns to Good Mead to celebrate its victory and mourn the dead. The Tribe of the Wolf arrives soon after, bringing any festivities to a bloody conclusion.

Returning to Good Mead

Roleplaying Encounter

Snowfall closes in again after Isarr is dealt with. Afraid of being caught in a blizzard, any surviving townsfolk return to their homes. Kendrick's promise of a feast compels those from Dougan's Hole to stay over in Good Mead, if only until the weather clears. The celebration takes place in the mead hall.

Dealing with Isarr

Isarr doesn't talk and is more than capable of withstanding interrogation. He strains against his bonds like an animal in a trap, seizing any opportunity to escape. Only after he sees Kendrick does he show any sign of human emotion, defiantly spitting curses and promising to bring down Malar's fury upon the leader of Good Mead. Kendrick has him clapped in irons and imprisoned overnight inside the brewery.

If the characters have too easy of a time in the battle against the barbarians, Isarr might escape his bonds to trouble them. He uses any weapon he can acquire. If he is among attackers when Jütti attacks in "Queen of the Wolves," the two might attempt to escape rather than fight to the death.

The next day, if Isarr is alive in Good Mead, he's hanged in public.

The Feast

Slaughtered hogs are roasted over the fire and drinking horns flow with mead. Try to paint this scene as the end of the adventure, to maximize the surprise when the barbarians attack.

Isarr's body is laid out in the mead hall if he's been killed. As the festivities commence, drunken hunters take turns toasting their victory besides their enemy's corpse. Kendrick's cup remains still during these toasts, but he hides his sadness well.

The Messenger

Roleplaying Encounter

Play this encounter when roleplaying during the celebration is winding down. A messenger from the Tribe of the Wolf cuts the celebration short with a bone-chilling ultimatum.

When the messenger arrives, read:

A commotion rises near the front of the hall as the door is thrown open and chilling wind gusts inside. revelers are peering outside into the blizzard, where a bare-chested man stands alone with a torch in hand. As you approach, he calls out to those gathered inside.

"We come for our king! Surrender him willingly, and only your warriors will face our wrath. Resist us, and you all fly to the spirits on the wings of the Blood Eagle! You have one hour to decide!"

He holds up his torch. Many other torches rise into view from the forest edge near the village.

Guided by Malar's visions, Jütti Merliss led the tribe to greet their new king. Enraged by his plight, she now intends to exact bloody vengeance upon the town.

The barbarians promise to sack the town even if their king is relinquished, leaving the characters little option but to fight.

Preparations for battle can be made in one hour. Under Kendrick's command, the townsfolk muster in the hall and barricade each entrance with barrels and loose timber.

Allow the players to make plans as they please, but barbarians are watching from the treeline. Any traps must be made out of sight or the barbarians will know to avoid them when they attack.

Remain flexible. If the players plan well, be prepared to shake up the format of the following encounters. The characters have overwhelming odds stacked against them, so be prepared to throw them a bone or two.

Wolves at the Door

Combat Encounter Level 7 (1,555 XP)

Jütti orders the attack, forcing the party to hold the line against a screaming horde of barbarians.

Light: Dark outside, bright inside.

Monsters: 2 tigerclaw fang-wielders, 5 tigerclaw hordelings,4 tigerclaw braves.

Skill Challenge: Manning the barricade.

When the attack begins, read:

Horns blow from the forest as the barbarians attack. A tide of painted warriors pours from the tree line, charging forward to slam against your defenses. The line buckles, and screaming barbarians start leaping over the barricades.

Place the barbarians in empty spaces inside the barricades and then begin combat.

During the battle, enemies are thick enough that all squares outside the barricades are occupied. NPC defenders occupy some spaces within the barricade. Don't roll their actions, but describe their actions now and again with colorful description.

If you wish, any NPCs can join the party under player control. Add another tigerclaw hordeling for every NPC hunter present, but don't grant any experience points for defeating it.

Most of the townsfolk crowd into the back of the mead hall.

2 Tigerclaw Fang-Wielders **Level 5 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid, shifter XP 200 each

HP 77; **Bloodied** 38 **Initiative** +5
AC 17, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 15 **Perception** +4
Speed 6 Low-light vision

Standard Actions

⊕ **Heavy War Pick** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage, or 3d8 + 7 while the fang-wielder is bloodied.

Fang of the Sabertooth (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d12 + 5 damage, and the target falls prone. If the fang-wielder scores a critical hit, the target also takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Triggered Actions

Winter's Rage (weapon) ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: The fang-wielder first becomes bloodied.
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Close burst 1 (enemies in the burst); + 10 vs. AC
Hit: 2d12 + 3 damage, and the target falls prone.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: The fang-wielder can push each target 1 square.

Skills Athletics +11
Str 18 (+6) **Dex** 16 (+5) **Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 17 (+5) **Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 10 (+2)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common
Equipment hide armor, heavy war pick

5 Tigerclaw Hordelings **Level 3 Minion Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 38 each

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +5
AC 17, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14 **Perception** +3
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊕ **Battleaxe** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC. The attack can score a critical hit on a roll of 18-20.
Hit: 4 damage, or 7 if the attack was a critical hit.

Str 16 (+4) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 17 (+4) **Int** 8 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+1)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common
Equipment hide armor, battleaxe

4 Tigerclaw Braves **Level 3 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 150 each

HP 49; **Bloodied** 24 **Initiative** +5
AC 19, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 14 **Perception** +3
Speed 6

Standard Actions

⊕ **Broadsword** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 6 damage.
Effect: The target is marked until the end of the brave's next turn.

Sabertooth Spear (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + 5 damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of its next turn.
Miss: Half damage, and the target is slowed until the end of its next turn.

Triggered Actions

Sabertooth Jab ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: An enemy adjacent to the brave and marked by it shifts.
Effect (Opportunity Action): The brave uses *broadsword* against the triggering enemy.

Skills Athletics +9
Str 16 (+4) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 17 (+4) **Int** 8 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+1)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common
Equipment hide armor, broadsword, 2 spears

Skill Challenge: Manning the Barricade

During the battle, the characters need to attend to the barricade or they'll confront many more enemies.

Run this skill challenge during combat. If the characters don't attempt at least one primary skill check during each round, they accumulate one automatic failure and more barbarians burst through the barricade. Characters must be adjacent to the barricades to participate in the challenge.

Level: 5 (400 XP)

Complexity: 2 (requires 6 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Athletics, Diplomacy, Dungeoneering, Intimidate. Failing a primary skill check results in 4 tigerclaw hordelings moving into unoccupied squares adjacent to the barricade.

Athletics (DC 15, standard action): The character forces failing parts of the barricade back into place.

Diplomacy (DC 15, standard action): The character rallies the NPC warriors with rousing words, causing the barbarians pause.

Dungeoneering (DC 15, standard action): The character directs townsfolk to shore up structural weak spots.

Intimidate (DC 15, standard action): The characters' raw menace causes the barbarians to hesitate.

Success: The barricade is reinforced for now. The horde retreats after the characters have defeated any bar-barians that breached the barricade.

Failure: At three failures, a tigerclaw brave breach-es the barricades. The failures reset to zero, and the challenge continues.

Ending the Encounter

The encounter lasts until the characters gain success at the skill challenge and defeat all the barbarians inside the barricade.

When the barbarians withdraw, read:

A horn sounds from the forest, and the barbarians withdraw back to the treeline. Their numbers are diminished, but many torches still burn in the dark forest.

"Have we won?" asks one of the defenders.

The party can take a short rest while the barbarians muster for their final attack.

Queen of the Wild

Combat Encounter Level 7 (1,705 XP)

Jütti's patience has worn thin, and now she leads the tribe into battle herself.

Light: Bright (torches and fires).

Monsters: 2 tigerclaw fang-wielders, 1 tigerclaw shaman, dire wolf, 5 tigerclaw hordelings, 3 tigerclaw braves. The shaman wears a savage mask, granting her a +2 bonus to Will against close and area attacks.

Skill Challenge: Manning the barricade.

When the attack begins, read:

Blaring horns fill the air as barbarians pour out of the forest. This time their leader rides at their head: a painted warrior-woman wearing a fierce wooden wolf mask and astride a fierce dire wolf. As they smash into the barricade, she spurs her beast to leap the barricade in a single bound. More savages push through behind her, screaming in frenzied rage.

3 Tigerclaw Fang-Wielders	**Level 5 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid, shifter	XP 200 each
HP 77; **Bloodied** 38	**Initiative** +5
AC 17, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 15	**Perception** +4
Speed 6	Low-light vision
Standard Actions	
Heavy War Pick (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage, or 3d8 + 7 while the fang-wielder is bloodied.	
Fang of the Sabertooth (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⚅	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 3d12 + 5 damage, and the target falls prone. If the fang-wielder scores a critical hit, the target also takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
Triggered Actions	
Winter's Rage (weapon) ✦ **Encounter**	
Trigger: The fang-wielder first becomes bloodied.	
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Close burst 1 (enemies in the burst); + 10 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d12 + 3 damage, and the target falls prone.	
Miss: Half damage.	
Effect: The fang-wielder can push each target 1 square.	
Skills Athletics +11	
Str 18 (+6) **Dex** 16 (+5) **Wis** 14 (+4)	
Con 17 (+5) **Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 10 (+2)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common	
Equipment hide armor, heavy war pick	

Place the barbarians in empty spaces inside the barricades and then begin combat. As before, during the battle, enemies are thick enough that all squares outside the barricades are occupied.

Holding the Line

Play the "Manning the Barricade" skill challenge again during this encounter.

Conclusion

The encounter ends when the characters slay Jütti Merliss, regardless of whether they've achieved success on the skill challenge.

Tigerclaw Shaman	**Level 5 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid, shifter	XP 200
HP 52; **Bloodied** 27	**Initiative** +5
AC 19, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 19	**Perception** +11
Speed 6	Low-light vision
Traits	
Razorclaw Healing	
While the shaman is bloodied and has at least 1 hit point, it regains 4 hit points at the start of each of its turns.	
Standard Actions	
Longspear (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 8 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of its next turn.	
Phantom Fangs (implement, psychic) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +8 vs. Will	
Hit: 2d8 + 4 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of its next turn.	
Miss: The target is slowed until the end of its next turn.	
Minor Actions	
Concussive Roar ✦ **Encounter**	
Attack: Close blast 3 (enemies in the blast); +8 vs. Will	
Hit: The shaman pushes the target up to 3 squares, and the target is immobilized (save ends).	
Miss: The shaman can push the target 1 square.	
Skills Heal +11, Nature +11, Religion +9	
Str 13 (+3) **Dex** 17 (+5) **Wis** 18 (+6)	
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 15 (+4) **Cha** 14 (+4)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common	
Equipment hide armor, longspear, totem	

When Jütti dies, read:

A wave of fear washes over the barbarians as their leader falls. The horde begins to rout, peeling back to the forest in a growing tide. Those who stay are quickly cut down.

Hesitant cheers break out among the defenders. Although wary at first, they soon gather in strength until everyone is celebrating. In time, you hear your names being chanted.

The battle of Good Mead has been won.

Dire Wolf	**Level 5 Skirmisher**
Large natural beast (mount)	XP 200
HP 67; **Bloodied** 33	**Initiative** +7
AC 19, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16	**Perception** +9
Speed 8	Low-light vision

Traits

Pack Harrier

The wolf has combat advantage against any enemy that is adjacent to two or more of the wolf's allies.

Pack Hunter (mount)

The wolf's rider has combat advantage against any enemy that is adjacent to one of the rider's allies other than the wolf.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Bite** ✦ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8 + 4 damage, or 3d8 + 4 against a prone target. The target falls prone if the wolf has combat advantage against it.

Str 19 (+6)	**Dex** 16 (+5)	**Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 19 (+6)	**Int** 5 (-1)	**Cha** 11 (+2)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

4 Tigerclaw Hordelings	**Level 3 Minion Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 38 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	**Initiative** +5
AC 17, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14	**Perception** +3
Speed 6	

Standard Actions

⊕ **Battleaxe** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC. The attack can score a critical hit on a roll of 18-20.

Hit: 4 damage, or 7 if the attack was a critical hit.

Str 16 (+4)	**Dex** 14 (+3)	**Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 17 (+4)	**Int** 8 (+0)	**Cha** 10 (+1)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common

Equipment hide armor, battleaxe

4 Tigerclaw Braves	**Level 3 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 150 each
HP 49; **Bloodied** 24	**Initiative** +5
AC 19, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 14	**Perception** +3
Speed 6	

Standard Actions

⊕ **Broadsword** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC

Hit: 1d10 + 6 damage.

Effect: The target is marked until the end of the brave's next turn.

Sabertooth Spear (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d6 + 5 damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of its next turn.

Miss: Half damage, and the target is slowed until the end of its next turn.

Triggered Actions

Sabertooth Jab ✦ **At-Will**

Trigger: An enemy adjacent to the brave and marked by it shifts.

Effect (Opportunity Action): The brave uses *broadsword* against the triggering enemy.

Skills Athletics +9

Str 16 (+4)	**Dex** 14 (+3)	**Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 17 (+4)	**Int** 8 (+0)	**Cha** 10 (+1)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common

Equipment hide armor, broadsword, 2 spears

Treasure

Characters searching the barbarians' bodies can uncover the following treasures: a set of three silver bird whistles bound in red leather, carved like an eagle, an owl, and a sparrow (25 gp each), a silver torc capped with the carved likenesses of snarling wolves (80 gp), a silver cloak pin shaped like an elk's antlers (25 gp), and 40 gp in loose coins. The shaman wears a *savage mask*.

Concluding the Adventure

The party has driven the Tribe of the Wolf back into the wilds, leaderless and without direction. The characters have earned the favor of Good Mead. Other towns are heartened to learn of Isarr's defeat, and word soon spreads of the party's triumph in battle. Such celebrity doesn't last long, though. This is Icewind Dale, and each cold day brings fresh perils.

About the Author

Will Doyle's previous contributions to *Dungeon* magazine include "Tears of the Crocodile God" (*Dungeon* 209), "Glitterdust" (*Dungeon* 211), and "The Rolling Tomb" (*Dungeon* 215). Will and his girlfriend Stacey run a D&D blog at http://beholderpie.blogspot.co.uk

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